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Kuncheria Pathil

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Church in the Third Millennium

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Editorial

Christianity, and for that matter any religion, is not a ready-made product, which remains fixed once for all, but in continuous change, always in the making, in the ongoing process of history. Every student of history of Christianity knows how the present structures, patterns of ministry, ways of worship and theological thinking have been shaped by the socio-historical and cultural forces of the past. In the same manner tomorrow's Church will be the product of the creative forces of today. People who have a sense of history and an eschatological vision of the Church will naturally raise the question about the future of the Church when we are stepping into the threshold of the third millennium. What are our dreams and visions about the shape of the Church to come?

As we enter into the third millennium what is required of the Church is, first of all, a radical conversion which should start with a genuine act of confession to God and to our brothers and sisters. Samuel Rayan, as a Christian theologian, representing the Church makes such an honest confession of its sins, failures, shortcomings, errors and weakness throughout the past 2000 years. Is the entire Church today ready to make this confession its own as coming out from the depth of its heart?

The next two articles in this number highlight two important areas of the Church — Leadership in the Church and Liturgy or Worship. Felix Wilfred characterizes the future leadership in the Church as a "liberating leadership". The Church leadership today has to recapture the style of Jesus' leadership which was prophetic, charismatic and liberative. Will the leadership in the Church be ready to gather and lead the last and the least of the society as Jesus did and thus make itself credible, creative and liberating? Paul Puthanangady would describe worship not merely as an act of adoring and placating God, but as an enactment of God's act of creation and redemption in symbolic forms to which we have to respond by our involvement and

commitment for the transformation of the world by a life of love, self-giving and sacrifice.

What are the prospects of an Ecumenical Church in the third millennium? The vision of an ecumenical Church is given by Kuncheria Pathil. The One Reunited Church will not be a big monolithic Church where the identities of the different Churches disappear. Rather, it will be a communion or fellowship of the different Churches where each Church accepts the other as unique, each contributing to the catholicity or wholeness of the Church of Christ. The one Church of Christ exists in the many different Churches.

The Church will have to face something radical in the third millennium, as we are entering into a totally different epoch. Raimond Panikkar compares it to the shift from Christendom of the medieval period to the Christianity of the modern period. Today the sociological fact is that so many people are extricating themselves from Christianity as an institutional religion, and moving towards "Christianness", accepting the Christian values and Christ-like attitudes while rejecting many of the traditional doctrines and practices of the Churches. Although Panikkar would keep the clear distinction between Christendom, Christianity and Christianness, he is not for radically separating them, but for keeping them together in creative tension and polarity.

We are not offering here any magic formula or blueprint for the Church in the third millennium. The Church has to create its future out of the present by reading the signs of the time and by involving itself in the struggles of the people in the world today. The Church of the future will be the people's Church which will underscore much more its task of enhancing Christianness and of transforming the world rather than its numerical and institutional strength and its so-called doctrinal purity.

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Kuncheria Pathil

I Confess ...

I

But before I make my confession let me tell you who I am. Now-a-days I call myself the People of God. It is an old name which I had let go out of use for centuries. I gave myself other names, restrictive and exclusive names, names of power, and imperial names. Hence there is some difficulty and unclarity concerning my identity. That is the first sin I wish to confess today: the sin of alienation from myself.

People of God? But who is not God's people? Whom has God ever left uncovenanted? Creation itself is a covenant which makes all women and men God's people, and all the universe God's family. I know some who do not name God or profess atheism. But that need not mean they do not "know" God. Those who have no consciousness of God may, nevertheless, be 'living' Him and walking with Him. All who care for their neighbour, or hunger for justice, or uphold people's dignity live in God and God lives in them. God knows them, God acknowledges them as Her own, as people whom She is even now loving into existence, breathing into life, and speaking into history. God leads them into freedom as once He brought Israel from Egypt and Philistines from Captor and Arameans from Kir (Amos 9:7). Love and justice are ways in which the people-hood, covenanted in creation, is realized historically. Any move away from justice and love "unpeoples" me: God's My-People would then become No-People-of-Mine (Hos 1:9). How often have I not set aside the pact that brought me into being, and cared more for power and political gain than for justice and love! That is how my name, my reality, has become ambiguous.

Sometimes I am the Supreme Pontiff, or His Holiness, or the Pope; and I concentrate on myself all power so that I feel

rather like the owner and master of Christians than like one of them, charged with certain services to fellow servants. At other times I am all the bishops together! Or I am some bishops meeting somewhere. Or I am even a single bishop, taking orders from above and issuing orders. Or, I am the local community of the baptized who have put their faith in the God who raised Jesus from the dead. But what is baptism? A water ritual administered in infancy? That is the general impression I have created, and now I feel somewhat guilty. For is not baptism our participation in the baptism Jesus received? (Lk 12:49-50; Mk 10:35-45). And what was his baptism, that pre-occupation that strained his soul, but his total immersion in and commitment to God's cause in the world which is identical with the cause of the exploited and marginalised masses of the people? But I have trivialised Baptism, and that is part of my confession, though I am not sure of repentance or of my resolve to change my ways. As for faith — what is that? Saying Lord, Lord, and reciting the orthodox creeds? That, once more, is the impression I have succeeded in creating by one-sided overemphasis on dogmas and religious words. I must know that faith is unreserved commitment to God's justice on our earth, justice to the oppressed and the dispossessed. But that is what I have paid relatively little attention to. I am to blame. But am I penitent enough and converted enough to be ready for absolution?

I am Kyriake, the Assembly or the Body of the Lord. What makes a group of women and men the Lord's body, the Lord's assembly? Certain rituals? Or wonder-works and exorcisms? If I have no deeper links with Him than that, I can already hear Him say, "I have never known you; away from me...For I was hungry and you did not care to feed me" (Mt 25:41-47; 7:21-23). The hungry and the homeless, the least of the riceless or the naked are the Lord's body, are the Christ's 'Selfdom'. To feed them is to feed him, to shelter them is to house him. That is how the Kyriake takes flesh and comes into being. The *kyriake*, as distinct from the *ecclesia*, are the victims of unjust and exploitive systems. They are Christ's vicars on earth (Mt 25:34-40) — a saving truth which I have, in the course of centuries, done everything to obscure. I am the Mystery of the tortured and glorified Body of Christ. And this I often confuse with the ecclesiastical institution. I know I am a communion in each place, and a communion of such communions

across the world; but then I proceed to cloud this vision and subvert its meaning through a deadly emphasis on hierarchism. Communion is God's and Christ's creation, while hierarchy is the mark, the bane, of imperial and feudal models of social ordering. I seek to hold the two together, the former with words, the latter with practice and dire sanctions. That is how my face and name became unclear to myself. I know I must repent of this confusion and of its untruth, but my heart is too hard to change now. I have myself become a victim of the mess I have made of your beautiful gifts.

Do I make things clearer by speaking of "separated brethren" and holding that they "lack that fullness of unity with us which should flow from baptism"? (UR 22). They lack; how about me? apparently I do not lack, I seem to possess the perfection of unity with them! It is as if they are separated from us, while we are not separated from them though for the separation "men of both sides are to blame"! Such ambiguities are common in my speech, and the reason may be my preference to deal in generalities and abstractions rather than in concrete realities.

I am universal, particular and local. Wherever there is solidarity in liberation struggles, there I take place. There I am local. When this solidarity is celebrated in a sharing of meal, there I grow in depth and grace. Such struggles are local and real; their celebrations are local, real and equal. There is no Universal Eucharist; nor does the Eucharistic Mystery of the Body of Christ celebrated in one place have dominance over the Eucharist celebrated in another place. If that is so, I am the thousands of small groups gathered in thousands of places the world over in Jesus' name, in the name of God's rule over the earth, and of God's justice and freedom (Mt 18:19-20). I am the innumerable autonomous communions springing up all over the face of the earth, responsible all of them to one another in equality, freedom and friendship, and in fidelity to the memory of Jesus. How is it then that I have developed a tradition in which one local realization of myself insists on dictating to and controlling all others in all aspects of their lives? Where does this compulsion spring from? from putting on the mind of Jesus or from internalising the manners of the empire?

Sometimes I am a peculiar type of building with a presumed sanctity of its own, independent of the holiness of the

people who are the house and the household of God. Or, I am a code of laws; or I am consolidated bureaucratic power. These have I regularly allowed to overshadow the weightier things of the gospel of Jesus, namely, justice, mercy, fellowship and good faith. I tend to equate and identify my laws with your reign. This perhaps is my worst sin: my penchant to attribute greater weight to my commandments than to your Word, and to set up new sins and multiply chances of damnation. This is my sin: my secret yearning to control the Spirit and cage Her. Her wind-like freedom and unorganizability do not tally with my centralised legalisms and rigidities, which She seems to take delight in upsetting.

In a sense I am not sorry for the variety of meanings I carry and the many levels of significance I convey. But I must own up responsibility for the unclarity and the ambiguity which I have allowed to envelop around me and which some use to serve their own interests even when these contradict my inmost reality as the sacrament of him who is sacrificial love and freedom.

II

Penitence and confession is nothing new to me. All the old liturgies have confession by priest and people. At the beginning of the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass, the priest confessed to God and the people and the people confessed to God and the priest. And people and priest pronounced forgiveness and absolution on each other. The reformed Mass has retained the penitence, but the reciprocity of absolution is not so pronounced. Everyone's penitence and conversion involves me; it is mine just as everyone's sin and guilt are mine too within the mysterious human and cosmic solidarity which binds us together.

I am in the habit of insisting that I am holy and spotless though my members, all of them, can be and in fact are sinful. But what am I apart from my members? An abstraction. And an abstraction is neither holy nor sinful. It is in my blood and culture to make such distinctions. But the solidarity I just mentioned knows that as long as one man/woman is in chains humankind is not free (K. Marx). As long as one member of mine is sinful, I am sinful, and I need daily to repent and be absolved. It was a great experience when in the Vatican Council I publicly confessed my share of guilt in causing and perpetuating christian disunity,

and committed myself to continual self-reformation, to correct my own deficiencies including defects in past formulations of doctrine (UR 6 and 3; Bokenkotter, 423). I am a pilgrim of faith, falling and rising, losing my coin and finding it again, growing cold in love and recovering the warmth, and in the process coming to know the God who walks with me (Lk 15:24; Rev 2 and 3). The Council witnessed my conversion to ecumenism. I had remained aloof from it since 1928 (*Mortalium animos*), and I had been unfriendly since 1948 (*Monitum*). From an institutional, juridical and clerical understanding of myself I got converted to a view of myself as the Mystery of the People of God. I began to pay attention to the laity who had not mattered for centuries except as payers of dues and consumers of religious goods produced by the clergy. In the Council I was able to break "the deadening grip of a monopolistic clericalism" (G. C. Young in Abbot, *Documents of Vatican II* p. 529). I recognized the laity as God's people, and affirmed their vocation to christian perfection which so far had been presented as the domain of monastic endeavours, exclusive to monks and nuns. I recognized the equality of all christians in basic vocation, dignity and commitment. I turned from authority as power over God's people to the biblical idea of authority as service, and I placed authority squarely within, not above, the community of God's people, implying that those in authority are responsible to the community.

All that points to the conversion I underwent from abstract and essentialist modes of thought to human history, to the historical dimensions of revelation, Bible, dogma, liturgy. I came to affirm that

"liturgical forms and customs and dogmatic formulations, thought to have arisen with the apostles, now appeared as products of complicated processes of growth within the womb of history" (J. Ratzinger, 99).

My conversion went deep enough to let me accept gladly the progressive cultural and social movements of modern history which previously I had regarded with much skepticism if not outright hostility and condemnation (Bokenkotter, 424). I withdrew my opposition to democracy and liberty. I went farther: for the first time for centuries I upheld religious liberty and freedom of conscience. This has been for me a major internal revolution. For through Gregory XVI and Pius IX I had once condemned freedom

of conscience as an "execrable error" and "delirious ravings". Comparable to this is the restoration in the liturgy of people's language after centuries of resistance to people's demand, and after centuries of arrogant and thoughtless imposition of a dead language over the faithful the world over. In the document on the church in the modern world, I began to look at the world more positively after a long history of contempt for it and flight from it. I was able to overcome, partially at least, my deep-seated teacher complex and to show considerable willingness to learn from the world, from its science and its wisdom, its findings, achievements and methods.

As I confessed my share of the guilt in causing christian division, so I also confessed my share in the responsibility for the emergence of modern atheism. Atheism is not a spontaneous development but a critical reaction against religions including christian beliefs, on account of believers' practice of war and greed and treachery, imperialist conquests, colonial oppression, extensive genocide and profound exploitation of the masses. It is from the womb of these atheistic practices that theoretical atheism was conceived. I not only did not condemn with clarity and strength such concrete and criminal denial of God; I have often connived at it and been party to it. I am aware that my penitence at this point is yet inadequate.

I have taken a positive attitude not only towards the modern world but towards the great world religions as well. About them I have said a respectful word, and expressed a positive evaluation. This is somewhat new for me, and marks my conversion from a tradition of violent attack on other religions and of secret or not so secret contempt for them. This new appreciation of religions and history called for and involved a radical rethinking [of the old axiom, No salvation outside the church. In Vatican II I confessed that all who, moved by grace, follow their conscience are saved even though they have no explicit knowledge of me or Christ or even of God. This marks a profound conversion from deep-rooted and rigid beliefs which had fuelled the missionary movement for centuries. A rigid understanding of this axiom began to be given up in the West even before the Council as may be seen in the Holy Office's letter, 1949, to the Archbishop of Boston about the Feeney case. In Asia probably, and in Africa too, the axiom had never been able to strike roots (LG 16). In

line with this is my conversion to the principle of inculturation in mission and in the liturgy and christian living in general. This is something I had rejected in my colonial past, notably in my condemnation of Chinese rites (Matteo Ricci) and Malabar rites (Roberto de Nobili), and in the imposition of west European and west Asian forms of christianity on all the peoples of the world.

I have also repented of and laid aside a thousand year old error which had reduced religion to cult and had cut faith off from life. I have come to affirm that all christians, priest included, are citizens of two cities and have earthly responsibilities to fulfil (GS 43). And then I was able to say in India in 1974 that today I recognize that "salvation is not restricted to spirituality and pure eschatology, but includes the renewal, liberation and fulfilment of the human person and human society". Hence "the priest is not confronted with a dilemma between two mutually exclusive alternatives, namely either evangelization or development, either christianization or humanization but he is expected to embrace both as integral parts of my global mission" (CBCI Deliberation on Evangelisation, 1974).

There are also pre-conciliar instances of my conversion and confession, with implicit if not explicit abjuring of positions and practices cherished for decades or for centuries. One example would be the 1943 document *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, commending the use of historical-critical methods in the study and interpretation of the Bible. I was thus totally reversing my repeated rejection and condemnation of these methods through the decrees of the Biblical Commission since its inception early this century. Through the document I was expressing repentance for the repression I had let loose on catholic thinkers and scholars in the days of my anti-modernist frenzy. Another example of conversion would be my final willingness, expressed in the Lateran Treaty, 1929, to live and serve the gospel without the power and the wealth represented by the Papal States, over the loss of which I had been sulking since 1870, (though in the end my loss was made good by a munificent monetary compensation at the time of the Treaty). A third example may be the canonization, 1920, of Joan of Arc, thus rendering full justice after almost five centuries to that pure Flame of a Girl who embodied in herself the best of my liberating Faith. By that act I finally repented of and overcame my fear of the political and religious treachery that had combined

to destroy the Maid. A further example may be had in Leo XIII's decision to fling open the Vatican archives to historians. That was a step taken away from the paralysing fear of history and historical truth, fear lest the world should see me as I really am, with my weaknesses and my wounds, my miseries and misdeeds, and my need of the mercy of my God.

But nothing comparable to Vatican II. The Council has been a massive act of repentance and reform. A conversion from a tradition of verbalism and condemnations. A turning from a state of siege mentality to pastoral concerns and openness to other christian bodies, to other religious traditions, and spiritualities, to secular movements and endeavours, and to the world as a whole. A passage from abstractions to reality; from pure metaphysics to history; from clericalism and hierarchism to the people. In Vatican II I went to confession. How genuine my penitence has been can only be tested by the newness of my post-conciliar life.

III

I do not romanticize the first three centuries of my life. Then too there were divisions, jealousies and scandals. Still it was a period of freedom which every one enjoyed and asserted, especially through the martyrs, against imperial might. I was in those days the home of the poor where the marginalised of city and society could be themselves; where they could speak and be heard; where they found recognition and respect as well as warmth of affection in the company of brothers and sisters. But with the fourth century and my alliance with the empire, my captivity began. I let myself be bound with fetters of gold. I became a willing captive to imperial interest and the ethos of rulers; to medieval feudal structures and values; to stereotyped frozen phrases, dogmas and rules; to male chauvinism and male monopoly of power; to capitalistic culture and its programme of world domination; to the West's anti-communist ideology; to outmoded and oppressive bourgeois interpretations of the Faith and its documents; to abstract, static, essentialist thinking and rationalist mind-set; to banal Eurocentrism and rigid authoritarianism; and to the mechanics of ritualism and a deadly legalism.

Sometimes I cherished my chains, sometimes I chafed under them. Emperor Constantine first granted me freedom and equality

with older religions. Then he bestowed on me privileges and pre-eminence which I did not decline as temptations, but accepted gratefully. I recognized the State, saw its power as coming from God, accorded the emperor a special sacred place in the world and in religion, and went so far at times as to address Constantine as the New Moses, the Universal Bishop, God's Vicar on earth, and therefore my Lord with full power over me. And so I did not question his right to summon councils of bishops, to steer theological discussion through advisers or to punish theological dissenters with exile. 'The protest that might have been expected from me did not occur'. Privileges granted to me 'lulled rather than sharpened my critical conscience' with regard to such connections with the State. Occasionally however I did express the danger lurking in the alliance. The privileges sought and secured did compromise the freedom and the credibility of my preaching. Sensitive spirits began pointing out that since I came to the emperors, I had indeed grown in power and wealth but decreased in moral strength (Jerome). On rare occasions I had the clarity and the courage to tell the ruler that he was overwhelming me with honours in order to enslave me; he was flattering me in order to dominate me; instead of beheading me he was killing me with gold; he was exempting me from taxes in order to seduce me into denying Christ (Hilary of Poitiers. CSEL 65: 181-184). There were moments when I compelled the emperor (Valentinian) to cancel decrees assigning churches to Arians; or when I made the emperor (Theodosius) do public penance for ordering massacre of the people of Thessalonica (Jedin, II. 4-14, 79-90).

But my history of compromises continued. My 'barbaric holy wars, my crude anti-semitism, my sanguinary inquisitions, and my chase after witches are enough to show how far compromise could go' (Bokenkotter: 166-67). It is these I wish to confess. By the Middle Ages imperial power had passed to my hands. I crowned Charlemagne, I conferred the pallium, I spread legends about Peter being the gatekeeper of Heaven, and I got hold of and used to advantage the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals (c. 850), a mixture of forged and authentic papal and conciliar documents calculated to falsify the history of papal relations with other churches, and to secure for the papacy absolute supremacy. And then I proclaimed: 'I can be judged by no one. I have never erred and will never err. I alone can make and unmake

bishops, enact laws, call councils...Duly ordained I am undoubtedly made a saint by the merits of Saint Peter' (*Dictatus Papae* (Gregory VII) in R. W. Southern, 1970, p. 102). With this theory of power I laid claims to supremacy over society as a whole. With my new position I acquired the right to wear imperial insignia, the tiara, a conical headdress with a crown surrounding it. Later I changed this to two crowns, and still later to three! Now I was world ruler, wielding two swords, the temporal which I delegated to the civil ruler, and the spiritual. And I said: to be saved every human creature must be subject to the Roman Pontiff.

So I crushed emperors and subjugated kings. Before me they went down on their knees. I knew, and now I am certain, that the means I used was 'so political as to obscure the spiritual cause' I was seeking to uphold. The outcome was a grave loss of my spiritual prestige (Bokenkotter: 179). It is with repugnance that I, like others, recall that one instrument of my control over society was the infamous Inquisition, set up in 1207 (Innocent III) and made a permanent system in 1233 (Gregory IX). I used force on a considerable scale to suppress religious opinions. The emperors had used force against heretics, and I objected not. Augustine almost developed a theology of persecution. By the 12th century my laws as well as State laws sanctioned death as punishment for heretics. Brutal torture to extract confessions was definitively prescribed by me in 1252 (Innocent IV, *Ad Ex-tirpanda*). I revived this instrument of intolerance and repression in 1542 (Paul III). 'The system offers a disconcerting commentary not only on the medieval standards of justice', but especially on my capacity to betray the Gospel in the name of abstract orthodoxy and concrete power (Bokenkotter: 140-41). I am guilty of the torture and murder of thousands, and of profound distortions of your Word and betrayal of your Spirit, Am I really repentant? Am I sure I won't repeat the horrors were I to get the chance once again?

Since the 4th century and my alliance with the State, I became the guarantor of Rome's and Europe's cultural and social system. I accepted its patterns of organization, authority and law. 'The symbols of prestige, titles, clothes and buildings are all signs of the social image with which I identified myself'. And I monopolised the right to define values, and to provide legitimization for the social system. Social movements in those days had

religious connotations and so I had to repress them in order to maintain religious unanimity at the service of social cohesion (Houtart, 322-23, 339-40).

I am sorry for my role in the crusades, for the part I played in that orgy of rapacity and greed, thirst for blood and hunger for loot. Why did I provide a religious mask for the economic and political compulsions of the Europe of the day? The Crusades proved disastrous for the cause of christian unity. They still stand as a wall between me and Islam. In 1098 the crusaders took Antioch and committed the outrage of driving the Greek Patriarch into exile, and installing a Latin one in his place. In 1203 they ransacked the splendid city of Constantinople. And the average Eastern Christian soon learned to hate the rude, rapacious, barbarous western knights. And it is with shame I must remember I lent my name to this criminal adventurism.

I recall how alarmed I was when Aristotle's unspiritual, rationalist, this-worldly thought was introduced into the Christian university. I reacted though with caution. Speaking from Paris, 1210, I forbade lectures on Aristotle's philosophy. The ban was gradually lifted only because it proved impossible to enforce. Thomas Aquinas became the target of furious hostility; he was caught in the eye of an ecclesiastical hurricane. He was considered a danger to the faith, and denounced. This is a reaction I exhibit time and again when faced with new ideas and adventures in thought. Why am I angry long before listening? Why do I judge before I understand? What is the ground of my fear of the new? The irony of history made the same Thomas the very touchstone of catholic orthodoxy a little later, and Aristotle's thought, the favoured perennial philosophy of seminaries!

During my sojourn in Avignon I levied 'a vast array of ingenious taxes and fees' from bishops, abbots, pastors. And I used harsh measures to squeeze payment out of recalcitrants. 'Thus on July 5, 1328, in a single audience I excommunicated for default in their taxes one patriarch, five archbishops, thirty bishops and forty-six abbots'. The system led to criticism, rebellion and lynching of collectors. But what was all the money for? For pomp; for display of magnificence; to build massive palaces; to give myself courtiers, an army of knights, squires, and chamberlains, filling the spacious rooms. "Did not Avignon overshadow

all other courts by the extravagance of its style and the brilliance of its feasts?" Was it not soon 'reckoned the most civilized (read: vulgar) court in Europe? (Bokenkotter: 190-91). This sin I am not confessing, for this immaturity is still with me. I still collect the poor man's pence and spend it on incessant tourism and other extravaganzas.

My Curia had become wicked and corrupt. "The members were sick because the head was sick." 'Simony was at the heart of the curial system.' Sale of ecclesiastical appointments was a lucrative source of my income. Before Luther's protest 'some two thousand marketable church jobs were literally sold over the counter at the Vatican'. Taxes were levied on newly conferred benefices. Indulgences were promoted to secure funds to buy as many benefices or dioceses as possible. Pluralism was in order, and monopoly of nobles over high offices. Sons of nobles were appointed to bishoprics. "Between 1450 and 1620 five ducal princes were bishops, two of them only 8 years old when nominated." The lower clergy were ill-trained; they cared more for benefices than for souls, and concubinage was common (Bokenkotter: 208-209). I knew all the goings on, and I closed my eyes. Cries and appeals for reform reached me, but I did not care. What was in my mind during those many decades of decay and betrayal? Where was my heart? I had, of course, forfeited all authority, but I had power, and I sat tight on the throne till suddenly the flood of the Reformation came and struck me to wakefulness. The Council of Trent and its reforms were perhaps my repentance and conversion. Or was it a new way of consolidating power? For I now headed a more clericalised institution, more structured and less alive. Its authoritarianism came to a high point in Vatican I.

Meanwhile I watched the Mass "move away from its original character as an action of the whole community". "In the medieval Mass the priest no longer wore his ordinary street clothes as he once did but glided into the sanctuary" draped in a costly and ornate chasuble. He whispered the prayers. He spoke a language no longer understood by the people — a situation of officially sanctioned schism plus contempt of the people which continued till Vatican II. The people stood at a distance. "They were no longer allowed to bring up their ordinary bread for consecration." "Nor were they allowed to take the wafer in their

hands standing as they once did." The Mass was a mystery-performance by the mystery-man, the priest. Its original spirit of community participation had been blotted out. People came mainly to gaze at the wafer at the elevation, for the sight of the wafer had magical efficacy for the living and the dead. Special stipends were offered to have the host held up higher and longer. And there existed a whole clerical proletariat, the Mass Priests, whose only function was to say Masses and who in many cities constituted 10 percent of the population. All this time where was my fidelity to the Gospel? and my pastoral concern? and my apostolic continuity? and indefectibility? (Bokenkotter: 150-55).

IV

It was with a state of siege mentality, a fear of the new, and with rigid centralisation of power and government and cult and thought that I came to the threshold of modern times. And conflict began. The conflict raged first around the new cosmology propounded by Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo. Galileo showed how scripture could be reconciled with the new science. My fundamentalism, however, would not allow it. And I had enough power to condemn him, though not enough good sense to listen to him and try to understand. Not enough commitment to the truth. I had exhibited the same obtuseness of spirit in regard to Aquinas' use of Aristotle, and will show it again on coming face to face with Modernists and with Marxists. Then I condemned not only the rationalism of the Enlightenment, but all critical approach to religious reality. Richard Simon's *Critical History of the Old Testament* (1678), which questioned traditional assumptions about the authorship of many biblical books, alarmed me. I ordered its suppression. Another opportunity missed to wait respectfully on any possible truth. Catholic Simon's ideas burnt to ashes revived two centuries later in Protestant Wellhausen, and met with the same intransigence on my part. It was not till 1943 that I was able to open up to it, and welcomed almost everything in critical approaches to the Bible, which I had been indignantly rejecting for almost three centuries! What factor is it in my make-up that renders the sensing of the truth and responding to it so difficult and so slow? Something ungospel which I ought to repent of and remove from my heart and my set-up so that I may be able spontaneously and joyfully to vibrate to the truth wherever it appears.

Another source of conflict was the issue of religious freedom. Freedom was demanded on the basis of the personal nature of religious commitment. The Enlightenment held that coercion in matters religious was intrinsically evil, and that violence would only turn a man hypocrite. Sensitive thinkers held that Christians should believe in the power of truth rather than trust in censorship and repression; these have never succeeded in stamping out error. I disagreed and dubbed the idea an execrable error and delirious ravings. It took me over a century to be converted to the truth of the demand: my advocacy of religious freedom in Vatican II was a profound act of penitence and confession; and hopefully it marks my permanent conversion to this truth and to an attitude of openness and respect for any possible truth that might appear anywhere in any form through any human agency (Bokenkotter: 268-74; 305-308).

I acknowledge that my reaction "to the rise of modernity was largely defensive and negative". I was unable to meet free-thinkers on their own grounds and frequently I resorted to condemnation of their ideas and to forceful repression. The result has been the divorce of secular cultures from me, and "a state of siege mentality that characterizes catholicism down to our day" (Bokenkotter: 267-68). The Syllabus of Errors (1864) in which I listed and rejected 85 opinions and trends such as rationalism, naturalism, progress, democracy, freedom of religion, freedom of the press etc., is not completely dead, but continues to shape minds even today as debates in Vatican II revealed.

After the French Revolution I was glad to ally myself with the monarchs and the nobles in their effort to restore the old order. I preached the gospel of obedience to the establishment. In the papal states reactionaries took over when the moderate Pius VII died, 1823. The Curia abolished all the innovations introduced by the French, from law courts to vaccination. Priests were again appointed to all posts in the papal states, and the Jews were returned to their ghettos. I denounced the Polish rebellion and supported the Czar who suppressed the uprising — an extremely interesting fact for me to recall today in 1991! I gained by all this: I came to be regarded by monarchs and rulers as the bulwark of the old order, of the status quo. In many countries I was restored to position of privilege and supported by grants from

governments (Bokenkotter: 304-305). Meanwhile those who stood by the Gospel kept praying that I shake myself free of the State. My answer to them was that such separation would mean abject poverty for me. They saw the point — but welcomed that prospect: a combination of freedom and poverty was essential. "Only by suffering physical wretchedness and poverty freely could I really feel solidarity with the whole humanity and especially the poor and the weak, those tortured like Christ on the Cross." My response was to silence them. And they decided that I had 'divorced myself from Christ in order to fornicate with all his torturers' (Bokenkotter: 304-308).

Why am I raking over old ashes? Because I am not sure that my heart has changed. The old attitudes do not easily die. Is not the spirit of subservience to power and the struggle for power for myself still quite alive in me? and the spirit of the inquisition? and the desire to control rather than to serve? and the tendency to ignore the laity and to oppress and marginalise women? and to look upon freedom as a dangerous botheration? and to subordinate the human to the Sabbath? and to be satisfied with some social teaching and to withdraw when it comes to social practice and political engagement? May this confession mean for me a definitive conversion and a fresh start in acting justly, in loving tenderly and in walking humbly with my God and with his crucified people whom he is summoning to rise up.

V

It is not with pride or joy that I recall the way I reacted to the so-called Modernist movement. Now I know that concerned Catholic scholars were trying to face questions raised by modern developments in historical studies and scientific discoveries. The questions had bearing on the origin (and nature) of the human being, of the Bible, and of christianity. The questions raised were right and important, and had to be met if the gap between catholicism and modern culture was to be narrowed, and if the Faith was to be expressed in ways that made sense to the modern mind. In the 19th and 20th centuries it was not enough to repeat literally what Aquinas had said in the 13th century. But I insisted on such repetition. The Bible is free of errors, I said, and in interpreting it, all must follow the unerring guidance of the Fathers, the Scholastics and especially of Aquinas

— the man once suspect in my eyes! (*Providentissimus Deus* and *Aeterni Patris* of Leo XIII; *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi* of Pius X).

The polemics that followed were violent. "*Pascendi* represents a regrettable attempt (on my part) to systematize the inherently unsystematic thoughts of modernists." Today I regret the wording of the Encyclical and its violent tone: my presumption of bad faith in the scholars I attacked; my imputing to them evil motives; and my forgetting myself so much as to resort to sarcasm and invectives in what was supposed to be a magisterial judgment. The document was in bad taste, I confess. It abounded in such harsh phrases as "poisonous doctrines...most pernicious of all adversaries...the root of their folly and error...boundless effrontery..." Here and now I beg pardon of those the document insulted and injured. I am sorry that to extirpate Modernism I called for measures "that smacked of the worst features of the medieval inquisition". I ordered vigilance committees to be set up in every diocese to detect any sign of modernism; and a body of censors to watch over all literature connected with the Faith. All seminarians were to be indoctrinated in Thomism. And an anti-modernist oath was to be taken by all priests and teachers. There were also self-appointed inquisitors like Umberto Benigni right in my secretariat of State who organised a network of spies who worked covertly, attacked catholic thinkers, and drew up blacklists for Rome. I did not restrain them. Nor did I concern myself with the "many personal tragedies that occurred when their victims were driven out from their offices or teaching posts and even from the priesthood". "The excesses of Benigni and his like were brought to an end" only in 1914 (Benedict XV). Am I repentant of similar personal tragedies which I have occasioned in more recent times?

'Modernism was indeed stamped out, but at a tremendous price: the catholic intelligence was inoculated against error, but the dosage was almost fatal...Many of my most brilliant thinkers were silenced or driven out of theology. Catholic seminaries remained medieval ghettos until the middle of the 20th century.' The crisis was catastrophic: it led to a cultural lag in Italy and to intellectual sterility in 20th century Rome. I must admit with sorrow that this is no way to save me or to serve the people. The approach

is suicidal. Besides, did I have to be so hysterical? Could I not have listened quietly and sifted in leisurely fashion what was of value in modernist thought? Is that not the only becoming approach in one whose primary commitment is to Truth? (Bokenkotter: 364-68)

VI

I realize that my main problem is my need to cling to myself, to feel established and secure, and to avoid the risk of change. That points to three things: i) my deep resistance to being a historical reality, my unwillingness to be part of an evolving history. I want everything about me to be perfect and finished, infallible and irreformable, essentialist and eternal, beyond all the vicissitudes of the processes of history, and free from history's uncertainties, precariousness and search. That is also why I am not alarmed by a widespread and creeping docetism; I am unable to tackle it for I have an affinity to it. My deepest culture is Greek-essentialist and I am never really at ease with the bodily and the material. There is in me a deep hunger for the stable, the static, the changeless, the mathematically certified. On reflection I realize that this attitude tastes more of the inertia of death than of the movement of life. ii) Secondly this aversion to history and resistance to change means a profound unwillingness to accept God as my future, to be open and ready for a new word from God, and to welcome his surprises. I readily see God as my past, as the God of tradition and the deposit of faith, as the one who spoke long ago and will, hopefully, say nothing new and disturbing. I am more comfortable with a god whom I know, who is familiar, whom I can define, organise and predict than with a living God, indescribable and surpriseful, free like the wind. iii) And thirdly my attitude to change reveals my conception of truth. Truth to me is like a thing that can be adequately and neatly packed in propositions. And once I have the propositions, I have the truth securely in my possession as a deposit which I only need to guard and/or apply, and hand down faithfully. I do not have to worry then about the complexity and concreteness of truth, of its relation to life and praxis, of its development and transformation within the humus of history.

But how is it that I became so attached to the static against the entire experience of life which is always movement

and process? The main reason seems to be that since the days of Constantine I have assumed, as other religions did before me, the task of providing legitimacy and stability to the status quo. I have accepted to be the guarantor of the existing social order in return for support for my own institution and power. I have much institutional activity. To continue to carry it out I count on the good will of authorities. My schools, health services, salaries for the clergy, church buildings, tax exemptions and contributions from abroad are all sign and locale of my dependence. Hence at my institutional/hierarchical level and at the lay level of elites i) I am incapable of grasping the dynamics of history; ii) I always have difficulty in recognizing the phenomena of domination by class or by imperialism whether economic, military, political or cultural; iii) I oppose the concrete application of the doctrine which I am glad to preach, of liberation; iv) I invariably overlook established and legalised violence of the system and of the ruling class, but I am loud in denouncing revolutionary violence; and finally v) while criticising and condemning society for its injustice, I fail to criticize myself and my own interior social system with its hierarchism, clericalism, sexism, class alignments, class values etc (Houtart: 320-32, 341-42).

I see how on similar grounds the Jewish elite not only rejected the new that Jesus introduced into existing religion and society, but reacted against it with deadly violence. I did something similar in the case of adoption of Aristotle, the cosmology of Galileo, the project of Modernists, the historical criticism of biblicists, the inculturation experience of missionaries, the proposals of liberal catholicism, the perspectives of Teilhard de Chardin, the liberation theology of Latin America, women's demand to end discrimination, their demand for full participation in the life of the community, and the social project of Karl Marx. Every time a new wind blew, a new bud bloomed, a new dream took shape, a new possibility opened up, my first and spontaneous response has been to nip it, reject it, oppose it, harass it, condemn it and only when it refuses to die despite my efforts, after considerable length of time, do I begin to tolerate it, till it is made welcome at long last. If such is my history, I must ask, what has become of my sensitivity to reality, my instinct of truth, and my prophetic vocation? How is it that I seem to be the last in discerning the presence and action and movements of the Divine?

in history? Has the affinity to the truth, which faith creates in all, been undermined in me by other interests and concerns? Ah, there is much for me to repent of and confess and turn away from.

VII

My conversion is vital because what is at stake is my credibility. And credibility is vital to my mission which defines my deepest reality. I am here to witness to God's love and truth, and to the truth of life fashioned by them. I am witness by being their medium, reflecting and embodying them, translating them into historical symbols, and placing them within the range of daily human experience. Major compromises and prolonged betrayals undermine my credibility, undo my witness, and ruin my mission and me. Not that I can or should become a saint in an instant. But that I keep striving consistently, all the time, in the direction of Jesus, of his Gospel, of love and truth and justice; and remain open and sensitive to the slightest stirrings and whisperings of the Spirit of truth and love.

That means commitment to praxis. It is not enough to produce beautiful documents about freedom, collegiality, participation and peoplehood. I have not yet provided nor promoted structures of participation at parish and diocesan levels. I am still describing the omelette to be, I have not yet started breaking the eggs. Apparently there are those who want to keep the eggs unbroken even while elaborating on the description of the omelette. Originally I meant the Synod of Bishops to be a structure of global participation in decision-making and policy-shaping. In reality I have reduced it to an exercise in consultation; and have further emasculated it by taking from it the authoring of statements. The imperial-feudal model of one man rule waxes strong. Compare the documents composed by the Synod itself with those the Curia wrote after the Synod. The qualitative difference is a strong argument for synodal leadership in matters of faith, worship and discipline, even while the unique symbol of my global unity and spokespersonhood can continue to exist. Compare the documents issued by Vatican II with corresponding documents originally drafted by Curial commissions. Most if not all of these curial drafts have been rejected by majority votes or drastically changed and re-drafted. I cannot resuscitate these original, rejected drafts and present them for acceptance by Jesus' disciples and friends. They

do not represent the faith, consciousness and concerns and experiences of the believing people as do the Council documents. The same must be said of the various documents and instructions that issue from the Curia from time to time. Can they have greater weight than those the Council rejected? Were they to pass a council's scrutiny would they not also suffer rejection or considerable modification? I am aware of the fear of many that the old rejected drafts are being reintroduced and imposed. And I know that would spell disaster for my future. That is why it is necessary that regional synods meet regularly and frequently to discuss and settle all important matters.

And should it only be a bishops' synod or council, and not also of the people? of men and women representing all the constituencies of local communities? And should not these participate in the selection and empowerment of their own local leaders? I am sure such procedures are in the best non-imperial traditions of my history.

Serious and honest implementation of Gospel-inspired insights is crucial. I am only beginning to note the significance of the fact that at the global level a group of nations of the North Atlantic who take the christian name are also the richest single group: they control world economy and the life of the poor; they use the major part of the earth's resources; they own nearly all important research; they possess the major part of the stockpile of deadly weapons and command dreadful kill-power; they have a history of deep exploitation of people, of imperial conquests, of colonialism, genocide and plunder; of slave trade and forced labour; they maintain the world poverty they have created; they still contrive conflicts and wars, and unemployment and famine; they are fearsome money-lenders who hold entire nations to ransom, and swallow their land and their labour. In such a world what is the credibility of the christian name and of the christian Gospel? And what is my credibility if I am but a silent spectator, or a gentle critic who speaks only in harmless generalities and ethical principles, or I am even a historical accomplice? What is my credibility if my denunciations are selective and ambiguous? if oppression of peoples and religions by communists is "the shame of our times" while far greater and bloodier oppression by capitalists is apparently no shame at all? These I have never confessed. For these I have not sought forgiveness of the peoples of the

subjugated and devastated continents, not even in Vatican II. I have not sought forgiveness for the marriage of the sword and the cross, which I did bless so often, be it in the colonial missions, be it in the crusades, be it when I ruled Europe or the emperors ruled me.

At the local level let me repent of my squabbles over imported rites and liturgies, and over attempts to live in dead and bygone yesterdays rather than in the living, throbbing today, striving to build together a beautiful tomorrow. The rites squabbles betray my misunderstanding of what rites really are, and how they relate to faith and love. I could never have indulged in such prolonged and senseless quarrels if ever I had agreed to the view that sabbath is for human beings and not human beings for the sabbath. If that view of Jesus is acceptable, we could have a hundred borrowed rites and a hundred indigenous ones provided they liberated us for love and service. If they do not so liberate us, all of them are, as the prophets affirm, disgusting abominations. Let me then go and learn afresh what this means. God would have mercy, justice and good faith, not sacrifices, festivals and liturgies. I must repent of the time and energy wasted on "tithe of mint and dill and cummin", on straining out gnats while swallowing camels, on washing the outside of dish and cup and leaving the inside full of extortion and intemperance.

At the local level again, you may have seen me go abroad every now and then, to Rome, to Germany, to the USA, with a begging bowl and returning with much money, collected in the name of the Gospel, of evangelisation and of the poor. But people's questions are leading me to ask myself why the Gospel needs so much money. There was no such wealth and no such munificent sources in the first two or three hundred years of my life. And yet that was a time of faith, of martyrdom, and of significant spread of the Gospel, of meaningful interpretations of it and of its transformative action in human hearts and relationships and social structures. I had no schools and colleges then, no cathedrals and basilicas, no rich religious relatives abroad.

Today I am very wealthy at the institutional level even when the majority of Christians are poor or very poor. I do help the poor, but the bulk of my wealth is invested in costly and extravagant church buildings and in educational and health

institutions which cater in the main to middle and upper classes, who in my absence would have looked after themselves or would be looked after by their government. I run some schools for the poor, but I rarely enable the people to demand schools as their right from civil society or the government. I bring the poor relief, but rarely equip them for struggles to claim their share of the national wealth which their labour produces. At any rate, does the gospel life and gospel work need so much money? Yes, if imperial and colonial patterns of life and work are to be maintained. No, if local communities take the initiative to organise their social and religious life in self-reliant dignity and imaginative and creative freedom. My penitence includes a challenge to institute an honest Gospel critique of the way I understand myself and the way I function and serve. May be the probe will disclose the liberating truth of the non-necessity of huge funds and endless buildings in order to be a joyful and active Gospel community in any given locality. In penitence I pose similar questions about the immense economic power of the Vatican, its heavy investments in real estate and industry which brings it a big share of the postwar Italian boom, and its bank which does brisk business and of which some deals are reportedly shady (Bokenkotter: 407). By way of penance I propose to meditate on what I said to myself and the world in 1971:

"In regard to temporal possessions, whatever be their use, it must never happen that the evangelical witness which the church is required to give becomes ambiguous... Although in general it is difficult to draw a line between what is needed for right use and what is demanded by prophetic witness, we must certainly keep to this principle: Our faith demands of us a certain sparingness in use, and the church is obliged to live and administer its own goods in such a way that the Gospel is proclaimed to the poor. If instead the church appears to be among the rich and the powerful of this world its credibility is diminished." (Justice in the World, 1971)

VIII

My credibility is also diminished if in people's experience I am not a home of freedom. Freedom is central to all conceptions of God, of creation, and of the Human. It is central to all biblical revelation and spirituality. For freedom is the capacity for the great

commandment of loving God by loving the neighbour. But it has not always been central to my pastoral and spiritual concerns. I have fostered submission oftener than freedom. That is where my credibility has suffered. There are around us any number of masters, forces and structures which restrict life, fetter the spirit and claim dominion over human beings. I can be God's presence and a saving reality only in the measure I live and communicate the freedom of God, and his capacity for love. Jesus comes to open prisons, to demolish walls and set the down-trodden free. In Vatican II I made declarations favouring freedom of inquiry, and abolished the index of forbidden books. But how liberally and honestly have I been interpreting these declarations? How have I practised it? The case of Kueng and Curran, of Gutierrez, Shillebeeckx and Boff and Sobrino and Bermejo and others seems to show that "an inquisitorial mentality still holds sway in Rome". In 1968 did not some 1360 theologians sign a document calling for due process for theologians in cases where Roman authorities object to their teaching? (Bokenkotter: 436)

I am not doing enough to establish and safeguard my credibility as Sacrament of Freedom and the Path of Truth. The real due process is what happened in Vatican II; it sifted not only the teaching of theologians but the theological and doctrinal position of Roman Curial authorities, and in the process it was the theologians that got vindicated and the Roman positions that got rejected. The real due process would be frequent, regular, regional synods of bishops and peoples' representatives at various levels to clarify and settle all matters of faith and life and service in the world.

I realize that freedom will mean greater concern with and enthusiasm for the Fire that is Jesus and the fire he came to kindle than for my own cold laws and my ambiguous politics. I am sure I could do with fewer rules and laws and some more real, transformative, people-empowering politics. People in each place can themselves make the rules they need. They live the Gospel, they believe and love, and that cannot be done except in freedom. Freedom can give itself rules. It cannot in fact be ruled from the outside. That would be the end of freedom, hence of love, hence of the Gospel. With some trust in people, some respect for their faith and their attachment to Jesus I can leave most or all rule-making to the people themselves. With some trust

in the Holy Spirit and her guidance of the Jesus-community, I can quietly watch people make and unmake rules in fidelity to Jesus and to the truth of the concrete situation. What safeguards the Gospel treasure entrusted to the poor is not legal fences built from outside, but the living seed of the people's faith and the sun and rain of the Spirit.

I need not therefore concentrate so much on my magisterial power and privilege. I need not worry so much over dogmatic words which have acted as armed guards of that power-fortress. I must turn from a narcissistic centering on myself and my power, and turn to the people's great pre-occupations: hunger and food, rising prices, growing militarism and insecurity, and growing unemployment. I can talk less about theologians and their troubles and more about human right violations, prisons and torture rooms, state terrorism, racism and apartheid, Soweto's children, the massacre of the poor in Central America, the persecution of christians under USA's supervision, the global wars of the USA, the debt trap, the stranglehold of the IMF, the woes of the Philippines etc.

I am sorry I have not always called a spade a spade, nor always exposed injustice; I have not always protested, not been prophetic, not been the sign and the voice of the Crucified one. Let me take a moment, shed a tear, and be silent. An year's silence, not imposed but voluntary, will do me a world of good.

What I lack and need in particular is a sense of humour. I do not laugh enough. I rarely notice the incongruous in myself. I do not laugh at myself because I do not criticise myself. I once excluded an Italian journalist, Domenico Del Rio, from the party of journalists flying with me to Caracas. I did so because in an article published in the Roman daily *La Repubblica*, Del Rio had quoted a theologian who said that in allowing myself to be received by government leaders and State dignitaries I was courting temptation. Jesus had not chosen to be received by State officials. Instead of smiling at this, and arranging to be received by the poor, I took umbrage. There is a widespread idea that Jesus never laughed. That is quite a subtle and radical attack on the humanity of Jesus. I quickly condemn opinions that might in the least obscure the Divinity of Jesus, but opinions which pare down the humanity of Jesus and inculcate an insidious docetism,

I rarely censor. Why is that? I do not laugh because I take myself too seriously. Jesus laughed long and loud when his critics came with tricky questions seeking to ensnare him. He could laugh because he was a free man. He felt himself weightless. He was never a burden to himself while I am heavy, and I tend to throw my weight around.

Forgive me my sins. These, and others I have not mentioned. Forgive the length of this confession, and my meanderings into the past...Forgive me also the sins I love, and the love of power I am loath to give up...And for my penance, Let me say the following:

But why is it that the church you called into being
in this world has become a hard rock
of an institution?

It has amassed vast capital and the least of
our brothers are forgotten.

Why is it full of forms, O Lord,
but devoid of content?

It thrives on dull celebrations,
business-like operations,
plastic relations.

Oh, the heart is parched,
not even a mist of poetry
dwells in it.

Lord, forgive me for these thoughts
that burn in me. (Jeremias Aquino. 1988)

Delhi

Samuel Rayan

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Liberating Leadership

Towards Christian Leadership of Tomorrow

We are reflecting on leadership at a very critical juncture in the history of our country. After forty four years of Independence, the country is saddled with many unprecedented economic and political problems. Our nation is bearing every day more and more wounds inflicted on it by the communal forces. Conflicts and contradictions which have been seething underneath for many years have now come to the surface. The increasing violence and savage assassinations in connection with the elections just completed raise many poignant questions: Where are we heading to? What is going to be the future of our Bharat? And more importantly, what is the destiny of the poorest of the poor in our society? Such questions cannot escape any sensible human being, citizen and Christian in this country, who looks at the course of events with concern.

If we ask the question, who is today leading the country, the answer is very evident: This country is led today by invisible hands of the deadly idol – *the money* – enthroned in every realm of life. Money is the leader who commands, calls the tune. Anything from kidneys to court verdicts and university degrees can be bought by and sold for money. There is nothing which is not on sale; nothing which has no price tag on it. Possessed by it, people kill each other, mutilate, poison, adulterate, burn the innocent brides to ashes. Our country is increasingly infested by shameless parasites who make a profit on the penury of others. Money is an all-powerful leader who has unleashed his satanic powers in every field to strangle life, love, justice and humanity in this country.

Do we want to let this power of money lead the country, or do we want to react positively to the prevailing situation? What

is the model of leadership we project, and what kind of leaders we ourselves want to be at this moment? The question of Christian leadership is not simply a matter of organizing the Christian community. As Christians — no matter what our rank and position within the Churchfold — we are confronted with the future of the many sisters and brothers of ours in this country.

The model and inspiration for our leadership is Jesus himself and his praxis in the society of his times. Before reflecting on Jesus' leadership and our own leadership role we need however, to pause a while to consider, even though briefly, the nature and dynamics of leadership in general. That will help us to understand the leadership of Jesus better and to envision the direction of Christian leadership of tomorrow.

1. The Dynamics of Leadership

Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan of our country, Chairman Mao of China, Martin Luther King of United States, Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Archbishop Romero of El Salvador — these are men — to name only a few — who have impressed the world as leaders of great quality.

Obviously, leadership is not always necessarily associated with such outstanding personalities. Leadership is exercised in myriad ways by innumerable people in various areas and levels of every-day societal life. For, wherever there is a group of people, there arises the question of leadership.

The nature of leadership is determined by the personal traits and qualities of the leader¹. It is true. But that is only one factor, and formerly considered to be the only one. That explains the praise and admiration for the extra-ordinary power of will, determination, tact, endurance, calibre, heroism etc. of a leader. But today we know that leadership is a *co-relational* reality. We cannot talk about a leader without, in the same breath, posing the question about the *people or group* among whom he/she is the leader. The nature and quality of leadership will depend very much on the inter-action between the group or community and the leader². What the leader does is to play a particular social role

1 Cfr C. A. Gibb (ed.), *Leadership. Selected Readings*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1970, pp. 87ff.

2 Cfr Charles J. Keating. *The Leadership Book*, Paulist Press, New York 1982;

in the group or community. Therefore, no matter how much a person is endowed with extra-ordinary intellectual qualities and moral virtues, unless he or she is in solidarity with the community, he or she cannot be a true leader. As part and parcel of the group, a true leader gives a sense of shared direction to it, builds up awareness and motivates it to action.

The style of leadership will depend very much on the *pre-suppositions and perceptions* of the leader about the group, because these affect the way the leader relates to the group. For example the pattern of leadership will be very different according to whether the leader considers the people as a group of ignorant and incapable persons whom he should lead – in which case the leadership will tend to be arrogant and despotic – or, whether he takes the people as basically equals, having dignity, freedom and God-given resources – in which case leadership will be participative and dialogical.

Another important factor in the dynamics of leadership is the *context*. Any group or community finds itself at a particular level of growth, maturity; it lives in a definite cultural environment and historical situation circumscribed by various forces. A good leader interacts with the condition, the situation in which the people, group or community finds itself. The context is so very important for leadership; for someone who has proved himself or herself a celebrated leader in one particular historical time and context, need not be so in another context, and could even be a total failure as a leader.

Yet another point of consideration in leadership is the attainment of *goals*. Among other things, the leader is perceived by the people as someone who would help them to fulfil their needs, aspirations and achieve their goals as individuals and as a group. The nature of the task will condition the type of leadership and the inter-relationship between the leader and the people. In an organization or institution the goals are routinized, and the whole structural apparatus and bureaucratic machinery is geared to realize pre-established plans and goals. Here it is proper to speak of *management* rather than leadership. The leadership role will be more demanding but at the same time richer and

creative when the community is in struggle, in crisis and in a situation of conflict. Precisely because of this situation, unlike the functional relationship between the manager and the group in an organization, the relationship between the people and the leader should be very personal and intimate. The goal-achievement here is not through managerial kind of decisions; it assumes rather the character of a pilgrimage, and the leader himself/herself becomes a co-pilgrim with the people or community he/she leads.

Finally we should direct our attention to the issue of *power*. Obviously, leadership is associated very much with power, its exercise and control. There is no leadership, if there is no power, understood as capacity, ability or means to influence, determine, control or manipulate (depending on the nature and origin of power) the actions and behaviour of others. Power can be political, economic, cultural, moral or spiritual. Great differences in leadership results depending not only on how power is exercised, but also from where it is derived. In this regard, it is useful here to recall the distinction in leadership made by Max Weber³: Leadership can be based on the power derived from tradition, as is the case, for example, when a son of a village chieftain becomes leader. Here one inherits leadership, or is empowered by tradition. There is further the leadership derived through *legal* means. Someone is leader because he or she possesses certain legal entitlement or an official appointment. The leader here is empowered by law, by juridical means. This is the leadership typical of an organization. Finally there is the *charismatic* leadership in which power is not derived from outside sources; it is not something forensic; it consists in the personal charisma of the leader, his moral and spiritual endowments, his ability to respond to the aspirations of the people.

Where leadership is based on tradition or law, the leader tends to maintain the organization or institution. The so-called leader may have legal entitlement or religious rituals performed on him, but he may not possess any moral authority over the

3 Max Weber, *Legitimate Order and Types of Authority*, reprinted in *Theories of Societies. Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory*, by Talcott Parsons and others, Free Press, New York 1965, pp. 229-235; cfr also Robert C. Tucker, "The Theory of Charismatic Leadership" in *Philosophers and Kings. Studies in Leadership*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay 1968, pp. 49-74.

people. That is why, it is important to distinguish between *headship* and *leadership*⁴. Headship is a function performed in an organization or institution on the basis of traditional or legal authority, whereas true leadership is something which transforms, which leads to creative change through the charisma of the leader and his/her close relationship with the people, their aspirations, longings, their history and their life-context. And that leads us to reflect on Jesus and his leadership.

II. The Leadership of Jesus

Jesus' leadership is contextual

From the Gospels it is plain that Jesus' life and ministry were marked by historical concreteness. If interpreting and critically interacting with the historical situation and processes of a particular context is an essential mark of a leader, then, Jesus was truly a great one. He addresses himself to concrete issues affecting the people; he employs images and symbols that are closer to their every day experience. Appealing is his language, because it is impregnated with deep insights into the reality. Keen sense of observation and sensitivity to what is going around make the words of Jesus and his praxis truly that of a great leader of the people.

The contextual character of Jesus' leadership derives from his ability to read and interpret the signs of the times. Jesus leads those who listened to him with open heart to see the wonders of God taking place right in their midst, to experience the irruption of God's Kingdom with its challenges for change. The Pharisees and the Scribes were considered the leaders of the people; so too the Sadducees in the religio-political realm⁵. But their leadership was of little relevance or consequence to the larger masses of the people. They had ready-made answers and solutions, because they were not able to "see" God's work, his will being realized right before their eyes in the context of the history in which they lived. To them Jesus would refer as 'blind

4 Cfr C. A. Gibb, *op. cit.* p. 248

5 Cfr Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society*, Michael Glazier; Wilmington, Delaware 1988; cfr also F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, A Pickering Classic, Basingstoke, Hants 1987,

guides' (Mt 23:16), or speak of them as 'the blind leading the blind' (Mt 15:14).

The leadership of Jesus was not a leadership based on any authority deriving from tradition, or from some legal provision, but from the power of God revealing itself in the present. Unlike the traditional leaders who exercised their leadership by imposing on the people certain norms and regulations, by supervising and controlling (as in the case of Pharisees and Scribes), or by forcing the people to a system of governance by which they themselves profited (as in the case of Sadducees who benefitted from the Roman rule), Jesus leads the people to true freedom through his involvement in the prevailing context.

2. Prophetic leadership of Jesus

Precisely because Jesus acts in context, his leadership turns out to be a prophetic leadership. He is in line with the tradition of prophets who intervened powerfully in the history of their times. There were obviously the generally acknowledged leaders who conducted the daily affairs, like the king and the priests. That did not render the moral leadership of the prophets superfluous. But for their timely interventions, directions and warnings, the destiny of Israel would have been different. The kingship and priesthood were far from being adequate to guide the people. We see all this clearly in the cases of Moses, Elijah, Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah etc. Though Moses belonged to the Levites, he did not exercise priestly functions which he entrusted to his brother Aaron. He was involved in interpreting God's will for the people and guiding them towards the promised land. He was called to exercise the functions of a prophet, not of priesthood.

The ultimate reality of Jesus cannot be understood if his prophetism is by-passed. In fact, the manner of Jesus' speaking and his praxis, unmistakably manifest him as a prophet in the eyes of his contemporaries. Numerous are the references and instances where Jesus is referred to as a great prophet by the people and by his own disciples. "A great prophet is risen up among us" (Lk. 7:16; cfr also Lk 4:18-19; 7:39; 24:19; Mt 21:46; Jn 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17; Acts 3:22).

Jesus exercises his prophetic leadership in a unique way. At a time of great oppression of the people both by the local

religio-political leaders and the Roman imperial authorities, Jesus appears on the scene. It was the time when armed resistance to the foreign powers was building up, particularly in his native Galilee which was known for its political revolutionaries like Judas the Galilean (Acts 5:37), and its support for the Zealot movement⁶. The leadership of Jesus did not consist in surrounding himself with a band of people to resist the occupying foreign power. Nor did Jesus simply limit himself to a kind of a-political, and a-historical moral exhortation and teaching as the Scribes. The teaching of Jesus and his praxis were such that they had serious practical consequences and implications for the manner in which the society of his time was organized and the religio-political governance was made⁷. Though Jesus was not part of any political organization of his time like the Zealots, his prophetic teaching and association with the marginalized of the society, who found in him the hope of a new and different Israel, represented a threat to the religio-political powers of the time and their control over the people.

It is in the light of this prophetic leadership of Jesus, that we have to understand his call to discipleship. Jesus is not a leader who invites his disciples to conform or comply with the existing order of things, uncritical of the fact whether it enslaves or liberates, causes death or gives life. The following of Jesus the leader, presupposes a situation of challenge (and in this it is distinguished from 'headship' which relates to the maintenance of the existing order), a situation of crisis as when old societies and forms of life begin to disintegrate and the new is not yet fully in sight.

Leadership and following relate to the encountering of a situation of crisis and uncertainty. But it is also a situation full of hope as it augurs the birth of something radically new. The proclamation of the Kingdom of God by Jesus and the call to follow him are to be seen against this background, as a call, a discipleship to a new order of things. Hence the radicality of the

6 Cfr Richard A. Horsley – John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus*, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco 1985; cfr also Geza Vermes, *Jesus, the Jew. A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*, Fontana/Collins, Glasgow 1980.

7 Cfr Juan Luis Segundo, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*, Orbis Books, New York 1985, pp. 71-85.

demands by the leader, which relegates to a secondary place even close and cherished relations — father, mother, spouse, children, brothers and sisters (Lk 14:26), and possessions (Lk 14:33; 18:22). The commitment to the new order of things to which the leader calls is so engaging that one cannot and should not turn back, but 'let the dead bury their own dead' (Lk 9:60-62)⁸.

3. A leadership in the midst of conflicts

Because the leadership of Jesus was a prophetic leadership, the element of conflict was very much built into it. The Synoptic Gospels and particularly the Gospel of John give us vivid pictures of the conflicts Jesus had with the Jewish leaders — the Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees. The newness of the message of the Kingdom announced by Jesus with its implications for the established order, and Jesus' own manner of life, could not but provoke confrontation. Jesus did not mince words in this regard; he made his stance clear in unambiguous terms: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." (Mt 10:34-36)

The high point of this conflict was the incident at the temple where Jesus forcibly drives away the vendors, which act meant a challenge to the then religio-political authorities represented by the high priests and the Sadducees. They were alarmed at the activities of Jesus and his self-interpretation as these seriously undermined their position over the people and the order of the day they controlled. Hence the accusation: "We found this man inciting our people to revolt; opposing payment of tribute to Caesar; claiming to be Christ, a king" (Lk 23:2). Faced with the powers of evil which dehumanize people, and thus contradict the will of God, Jesus does not take recourse to skin-saving compromises; he faces them, confronts them, however, without bitterness and hatred.

As history bears out, great leaders not only had to face situations of conflict, in the outer arena of history, but also had

8 Cfr "The Kingdom of God is at hand", the first chapter in the book of Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*, Vintage Books, New York 1989, pp.3-31; cfr also Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and his Followers*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1980.

to undergo struggles within their inner selves. This was particularly so with the prophetic leadership, as we find in Moses, Jeremiah and others. Moses, for example, underwent great inner torments when he was rejected and came even to the point of being stoned by the very people whom he led out of Egypt (Num 14:10; Ex 17:4). The people even clamoured for another leader in the place of Moses (Num 14:4).

The Gospels do not conceal the inner agony of Jesus and his temptations. The path of Jesus was marked by many such moments of struggle and anguish. The inner strength Jesus derived by combating and overcoming the crisis and temptations, coupled with his deep experience of the Father, contributed to his unparalleled quality of leadership. He could therefore give out the call to all those who follow him to lay down their lives (as he himself did), rather than to bend the knees before the evil and the mighty.

4. Gathering and leading of the least

One thing which stands out very clearly in the Gospels is the fact that Jesus came into conflict with the leaders of his times because of his close association and solidarity with the most marginalized of the society. He was perceived as a threat because those whom the traditional leaders despised as the 'rabble' who knew nothing about the Law and considered as damned (Jn 7:49), were found in his company. They were the *am ha-arez* – the people of the land — people with no position, power, honour and prestige in the society, and looked down upon by their Jewish leaders as people of no significance⁹. Among them were publicans, sinners, prostitutes, the lame, the blind, lepers. The *am ha-arez* were leaderless and unorganized like 'sheep without a shepherd' (Mt 9:36).

9 The extent of the despise for this section of the people is echoed in Talmud when it says: "No man may marry the daughter of the *am ha-arez*, for they are like unclean animals, and their wives like reptiles, and it is concerning their daughters that Scripture says: 'Cursed be he who lies with any kind of beast' (Deut 27:21)". Quoted in Geza Vermes, *Jesus, the Jew. A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*, *op. cit.* pp. 54-55. The treatment meted out to the *dalits* in Indian society has been even worse, so much so a dalit poet prays to God: "God, make me a beast or a bird but not a Mahar (untouchable) at all" Kisan Phagu, a dalit poet of Maharashtra. Quoted in Ghansyam Shah, "Dalit Movements and the Search for Identity", in *Social Action* 40 (1990), p. 321

Numerous are the passages in the Gospels which speak of Jesus being surrounded by such crowds of people (Mk 3:32; 6:31; Mt 5:1; 8:1,18; Lk 5:1,3; 8:4,40; 11:27, 29; 12:1,13; 54:14-25). There were such crowds that Jesus had to get on to a boat so that he could address them (Mk 4:1); another time when Jesus asks who touched his garments, the disciples were surprised at that question and reminded him that he was being pressed around by the crowd (Mk 5:30-31). The crowds did not leave his company so much so he and his disciples did not have time to eat (Mk 6:31). He was lost so much among the multitude, that Zacheus had to climb a sycamore tree even to have a glimpse of him (Lk 19:1-4). The paralytic had to be dropped from above through an opening on the roof, because there was such a crowd that they could not reach him (Mk 2:1-4).

The *am ha-arez* hang on to his lips as he spoke; a message of hope rang into their ears. Their humiliating present plight was going to end. They realized that something great and wonderful was going to happen to them. For the broken and despised heard him say that the poor and hungry were truly blessed (Lk 6:20-21; Mt 5:1-6). Jesus made them feel their own greatness as human persons, as the image of God and as children of the Heavenly Father. He made them fearless and self-confident. He announced that the Kingdom which he proclaimed was the end of their suffering and oppression. In short, Jesus was truly a leader, because his person and message vibrated with their longings, hopes and aspirations.

It was not simply that the last and the least went after Jesus, because they found in him a leader who addressed their situation, but Jesus himself goes in search of them. Here again numerous are the instances where it is reported that Jesus was on the way, that he was along the road, that he was passing by etc. He was constantly on the move (Mt 4:23-25; 8:5,14,23, 28; 9:1, 9, 27, 32, 35-36; Lk 8:1; 9:51, 57; 10:38; 13:22). In fact he did not have a home for himself during his public ministry (Lk 9:58; Mt 8:19); to be with the poor and the oppressed was his home. He had a clear principle. This is what we would call today in India *the antyodaya principle* that is, the commitment to the rising of the least, the involvement with those who, in the eyes of others, have become unwanted and redundant.

This manner of Jesus' leadership differs from that of the leaders the poor and the lowly were accustomed to – of the Scribes and the Sadducees, who kept great distance from them. The people felt humiliated by the arrogance of these leaders, whereas in the leadership of Jesus, they found themselves affirmed, accepted, respected and honoured. In fact, Jesus thanks the Father that he has concealed his wisdom to the haughty and arrogant and has revealed it to the last and the least (Mt 11:25).

Another fact that strikes us is that the leadership of Jesus is very much based on the *rural areas* – in otherwise little known villages, hamlets, and small towns of Galilee. Jesus goes about the villages, and, as Biblical scholars tell us, there is no indication of Jesus having exercised his ministry in big cities of Galilee of that time like Sepphoris and Tiberias¹⁰. Rather a city like Jerusalem is where he comes into confrontation with the traditional leadership.

5. Leadership of the Kingdom – a familial leadership

The leadership of Jesus cannot be likened to that of a director of an organization or institution. Jesus' leadership is as in a family. An organization has its own way of thinking, managing, checking and achieving its goals. Human persons can become cases, instances or, worse, objects which the leader treats and disposes of. Leadership in a family, instead, is for the genuine growth of every member as a human person, and it is carried out in an atmosphere of love, trust and concern. In the vision and praxis of Jesus, leadership is a matter of communion, subject-to-subject relationship, as evident in a family. Jesus leads the people to enter into the new family of God, where he has many brothers and sisters (Lk 8:19-21).

The familial kind of leadership of Jesus can be seen particularly in his relationship with his disciples. Jesus takes them into confidence, and shares his concerns and his own self with them. Had Jesus been guided by the concept of leadership as in a modern organization, where competence, efficiency, achievements etc. are the yardsticks by which people are measured by the head or manager, then, he had ample reasons to dismiss

10 Cfr George Soares-Prabhu, "Jesus the Teacher: The Liberative Pedagogy of Jesus" in *Jeevadhara* 12 (1982), pp. 243-256 (p. 245).

practically every member of the small band of his disciples, even more so, when some of them so blatantly betrayed him or fled from him when the crisis struck (Mk 14:50-52; Mt 26:56). After all that happened, the way Jesus treats his disciples is something very remarkable; so is the deep sense of humanity and familial love that characterized his leadership. After the resurrection, he could have simply disbanded the unfaithful disciples, and recruited a completely new specimen of disciples to achieve the goals of the Kingdom of God. Jesus knew fully well that the Kingdom of God is not an extraneous reality to be achieved by instrumentalizing people. Rather, the Kingdom of God breaks into our history in the new and fresh relationships of love and justice, communion and sharing, acceptance and forgiveness. Setting aside the bitter past, Jesus addresses them with tender love as "children" (Jn 21:5) and greets them with words of peace (Jn 20:19, 21, 26). His leadership is aimed at the growth and blossoming of every child of God — every brother and sister — as a full human person in a new environment, in a new humanizing order of society. The familial leadership of Jesus thus corresponds to his vision of the Kingdom of God.

This leadership presupposes the equality and basic dignity of all and the recognition of their freedom. The relationship is therefore not of domination and subjugation, but familial, fraternal and sororal. In fact, Jesus' message of God's rule implies that one person does not dominate the other, which is the root-cause of all injustice, social evils and inhumanity.

That is why in unmistakable terms, Jesus warns his disciples against the dangers to leadership and projects a new model of the relationship that should characterize the leadership of the kingdom (Mk 10:42-43). Here Jesus speaks of "lording it over" (*katakrysisuousin*) which refers to the lack of respect to the freedom of others in the praxis of leadership. He refers also to the practice of "exercising authority over" (*katexousiasousin*), which means using power to achieve one's self-interests. This approach to leadership is contrasted respectively with two other attitudes: the leadership has to be respectful of the freedom of others which is indicated when the leader is called to be a servant (*diakonos*). Leadership is a service to the growth of the freedom of others, which is necessary for the flowering of the full and integral human person. Further, the leadership is to have the attitude of

slave (*doulos*), which means that as a slave in the society of the time was supposed not to have a self of his own — much less self-interests — so also in the exercise of power, the leader should not seek himself and his interests.

It is important here to note that the injunction of Jesus concerning leadership as service, is not intended only for the Church-community in contrast to the world. It does not mean: let the world be as it is, and only *you* be different. The leadership Jesus projects belongs to a new world, a new order of things which is to be universal. It refers to the new family of God which is the entire humanity. Selfless service and right use of power to increase the freedom and true humanity of others refer to any leadership in the family of God; selflessness in the use of power refers to any power — political, ecclesial or otherwise. It is the leadership of the Kingdom.

III. Future Directions in Christian Leadership

The main features of authentic Christian leadership can be clearly discerned in the model of Jesus' leadership intimately related to his message of the Kingdom. Because Jesus' leadership was contextual, prophetic, familial and ready to face conflicts, in solidarity with the oppressed — it was a liberating leadership. The quality of future Christian leadership in our country will, therefore, improve only to the extent that it follows the footsteps of Jesus and inspires itself by the Gospel of the Kingdom with its demands and challenges.

A political direction and a different power-basis

The Gospel of the Kingdom takes us right to the heart of the world, its poor, oppressed and suffering. Christian leadership which is leadership of the Kingdom concerns the larger family of the human community and its vicissitudes, specially those who are the last and the least; it is a leadership that is exercised right in the midstream of the life of the poor, in the arena of their history, marked by struggles, conflicts, crises, turmoils and ambiguities, but also full of vigour, hopes and promises. Genuine Christian leaders are those who immerse themselves into this history, where God is active, and critically interact with the concrete course of events which affect his poor.

Such a critical interaction means to highlight, sharpen and

collaborate with the forces of liberation within this history, and to confront those that are enslaving and dehumanizing. The challenge to Christian leadership is to transform the present history of oppression, suffering and tears into one of freedom and fullness of life. Christian leadership will, thus, have a political character inasmuch as the political is understood as purposeful activity that channels power towards the humanization and integral liberation of the oppressed, and thereby achieves the common good or true welfare of all.

The political direction of Christian leadership entails a different power basis. What does that mean? Today, power has as its source money, technological know-how, control over the means of communication, control over the natural resources, political patronage, higher birth, caste etc. In a way, all this can be named *mechanistic power*. This power can dehumanize, stifle and kill people and groups. It is imperative to alter the present dehumanizing power-basis, and indeed to search for alternatives. The new basis of power should be *human persons* with their rich social, moral and spiritual resources. The treasures of human resources lie buried among the poorest of the poor in our slums and villages. Who will help them unearth their own resources? The deposit of their human energy and potentials lie deep down as a huge reservoir of oil. Who will help so that it can leap into flames of power? True Christian leadership will help the downtrodden realize their human and social power, mobilize their hidden and neglected human resources and instil into them selfconfidence as Jesus did; it will help them to be critically aware of the sources, myths and manipulations of the oppressive mechanistic power, support them in their struggle against it and open up new and more humane political, economic and cultural choices and possibilities of action.

Are we Christians, priests, religious, bishops ready to exercise our leadership in terms of mobilizing the hidden and neglected human resources, or have we made our secret options in favour of mechanistic power? In fact, much of our present-day involvement would seem to fall in line with the enticing mechanistic power. How much we are allured by this mechanistic power can be clearly seen in the unabated running of elite educational institutions, mouthing at the same time high-sounding jargons

on option for the poor. Do we want to strengthen the mechanistic power-basis, or contribute to the heightening of human power and resources?

Headship of the organized sector and leadership of the unorganized sector

A concrete way of contributing to a new power-basis, is to take up those areas of societal life which are leaderless and unorganized. These areas are in general identified with the poorest of the poor in our society, banished from the world of mechanistic power that rules the roost.

It is a fact that the overwhelming majority of the poor in India find themselves in the unorganized sectors. Such are, for example, agricultural labourers, quarry workers, child-workers, construction workers and so on. They are spread out in villages throughout our country. In our cities too there is such a large migration of the poor from the villages where they find it impossible to survive. This large population of 'lumpen proletariat' lives on the fringes of the city-life, dominated by the mechanistic power controlled by the middle and upper classes. The poor with their rich human resources are at the service of the wielders of mechanistic power. They serve them as watchmen, porters, rickshaw-pullers, flower-vendors, shoe shiners, scavengers, sweepers, rag-pickers and so on. They live in hovels or on pavements and their children never attend any school. Is there any sense in Christian leadership if it does not address itself to the human resources of such unorganized sections of the people? Is Christian leadership worth its name if it is not a liberating one like that of Jesus exercised among the "rabble" who are closer to God's Kingdom?

To practise leadership after the manner of Jesus by relying on the human resources of people as true power, would call for certain clear options, priorities and normative orientations in our praxis. A congregation of the religious gives creative leadership, for example, if it concentrates on the literacy of the children of coolies, porters, agricultural labourers, or resolves that it will have its schools only for primary education, and that too in the slum areas of the cities. A diocese could decide, for example, to totally re-orient its institutions in terms of the oppressed *dalits* in the area. These are some examples and I need not elaborate the point

further here. But one thing is clear. As long as we are entrenched in the organized sector, what we exercise is not creative leadership, but a vacuous headship, what we contribute is not for the creation of new humanizing power-basis, but to fatten the present beast of power so that we can milk our benefits.

Leadership in the Christian community

What about the leadership within the Christian community? It is the challenges of the Kingdom and its demands that should go to shape the leadership and internal organization within the Church. In fact, Jesus is primarily concerned about what happens to people, to the last and the least. For him, any organization or leadership within the community of his disciples is subservient to the goals of the Kingdom.

If Christian leadership is kingdom-oriented, we are obliged to constantly review the pattern of leadership according to the demands and challenges of the Kingdom in each historical period and among culturally diverse peoples. The present form of official leadership bears in itself the marks of a historically and culturally conditioned past. In its conception and praxis it embodies in itself – as amply demonstrated by historical studies — the model of civil offices in the Roman Empire, the neo-platonic conception of a hierarchically ordered society, as transmitted through the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, the Medieval feudal traits and some features of the later day absolutist forms of political governance¹¹.

Further, if today most of the official Church leaders, many of whom are well-intentioned fine human persons show themselves – it must be admitted – incapable of critically interacting with the prevailing situation in the country, or of affecting the society in any significant way, it means that the received forms of official leadership has some serious in-built limitations. All this is not to bemoan the past or to judge it by present standards or to find fault with anyone. The point is something more serious: Given the limitations of the traditional forms of official leadership, there is need to search for new forms of leadership that would correlate with the demands and call of the Kingdom in our history and society — forms of leadership that would emerge out of our experience.

11 Cfr Felix Wilfred, *The Emergent Church in a New India*, Tiruchirapalli 1988, chp. 14: Development of Church-Structures. A Theological Study, pp.266-305

In fact, in the early Church, the Hellenistic Churches felt that they could not be ministered through forms of leadership deriving from the Jewish-Christian Churches (Acts 6:1-6)¹². This inadequacy of leadership was felt, interestingly, by one of the poorest sections in the society – the widows. It is the “murmur” (Acts 6:1) of the Hellenists which led to the emergence of the office of *diakonos* from the womb of the Hellenistic Churches. Today, it is no more *murmur*; it has become the *loud cry* of the oppressed, the discriminated against, that calls for a different type of leadership.

Christian leadership has today important implications in terms of the criterion and manner in which official leaders of the Christian communities are formed, or office-holders of the local Churches are chosen. We can understand the circumstances that led to the preparation of official leaders in protected environments and institutions, away from the struggles and life-realities of the people. But can we really approve it as a suitable form for the future? Similarly we can legitimately ask, what are the criteria that are employed for the choice of official leaders in the local Churches? Is option for the poor, one of those criteria? In a country like ours where millions of our poor brothers and sisters struggle to survive, it is difficult to see how anyone who has not made an option for the poor and the oppressed is chosen as the official leader of a local Church. Still more basically, is it proper that the official leaders of our local Churches are chosen for us from somewhere far away from the daily struggles of the people, and we still call ourselves *local Churches*?

There is, then, the whole challenge of *praxis*. Whatever be the theological legitimacy one may adduce in favour of present forms of official leadership, one thing is becoming clear from history and experience: A Church-leader, no matter how high a position he may officially occupy, can degenerate the ideal of liberating Christian leadership into enslaving headship, unless he creates a niche in his heart for the vision and praxis of Jesus. Invoking formal and juridical authority he claims to possess is no substitute for the lack of credible, creative and liberating leadership.

12 Cfr Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul. Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity*, SCM Press, London 1983.

Conclusion

If this is the direction of future Christian leadership, then a single Christian who acts upon history inspired by the Gospel and influences the society in which he lives is a leader of much greater quality than hundreds of official leaders who may exercise headship and may be engrossed in many marginal issues and pseudo-problems within the Church organization. This is not a hypothetical case, but is borne out by experience and history. There were hundreds of official leaders in the twelfth century Church. But of them, history has little to report to posterity. They are all outshone by the epochal leadership of St. Francis, the *poverello* of Assisi who identified himself with the poor and the lepers. His Praxis according to the Gospel radically challenged the feudal society of his times, as well as the Church.

Finally, Christian leadership is not something restricted to certain individuals or groups. Every disciple of Jesus and the whole community is called to exercise leadership. And this leadership has to be today necessarily a liberating leadership in the spirit of the Gospel and the praxis of Jesus. The *most* important thing is not who exercises leadership, but whether the leadership creates repercussion in the society and its historical processes; whether it leads the Church to the living out of the Good News of Jesus to the poor. The most crucial question is not which position one occupies, but whether what he says and does leads to personal transformation and change in the quality of relationships. Here is the test of the future Christian leadership.

Worship in the Third Millennium

One can speak of the future in many different ways: One way would be to look at the future as a mere continuation of the present through a process of natural evolution where nothing very startling could be expected; another would be to think of the future in a utopian style by envisaging events that have nothing to do with the past or present; a third would be to conceive the future as something new emerging from the present as a result of a radical change. In the first instance we have a common sense view, in the second a dreamer's view and in the third a prophetic view of the future. I believe that as far as we Christians are concerned it is the third view that we should have because our history is guided by the Lord who died, who rose from the dead, and whose Spirit is active in the world. We are rooted in the past; but we do not return to the past. We are fully alive in the present; but we do not absolutise the present. We look towards the future; but our future is in continuity with the past and present as well as something that emerges through the action of the Spirit who is engaged in building a new world beyond the expectation of everybody; hence there will be something unpredictable and totally new, even though it will have a continuity with the past. Since Christian worship is not a mere act of homage which the creature pays to the creator but an act of involvement in the historical adventure of God and humans struggling to build a new earth and new heaven it has to be rooted in the past, relevant to the present and challengingly creative with regard to the future. We are going to speak of worship in the third millennium along these lines. It should be the result of a prophetic vision and not merely that of dissatisfaction with the present or contempt for the past. In order to do this it is necessary in the first place to clarify the understanding of worship in the religious life of man and the specificity of Christian worship.

1. The role of worship in the religious life of humankind

"Formally considered, worship is the self-portrayal of religion. In worship the sources by which religion lives are made visible, its expectations and hopes are expressed, and the forces which sustain it are made known. In many respects the essence of a religion is more directly intelligible in its worship than in statements of its basic principles or even in the description of its sentiments."¹ In their search for meaning in life humans have always tried to look beyond themselves. This 'search-beyond' is religion. Every search to be meaningful must aim at a goal. This goal is God. In worship one gives symbolic expression to this search for the ultimate. Since the language used is symbol, it contains in it certain elements of mystery. Worship has an ineffable character. When these symbols are institutionalised we have ritualism. Here religion loses its character of search and becomes a mere means to attain certain immediate gains for the present or for a definite future after death. The relationship between God and human, which the acts of worship express is reduced to "I give to you so that you may give to me". In this way worship degenerates religion into a static relationship with God; it makes religion lose its character as an expression of an existential relationship between God and man.

At the root of every act of worship, there is a particular understanding of religion, of man's relationship with God. The symbolic expressions of it reveal its content. Let us analyse some of the basic symbols of worship.

The first reality that humans encounter beyond themselves is nature; they try to interpret this reality as manifestation of God; through a process of symbolisation they try to enter into communion with the Divine. One of the expressions of this symbolisation is the creation of myths. They are not mere products of imagination, but expressions of the ineffable. They represent the effort to encounter the beyond. In worship these myths are re-created and thus we have rituals. By getting involved in the ritual action humans go beyond themselves, they enter into a struggle to find meaning to their lives. In fact those who participate in these rituals are said to be enlightened. It is important to note here that worship here

1- Delling G. Gerhard, *Worship in the New Testament*, London (1962) p.xi.

is not mere adoration or petition, but an act of involvement in the process of evolution of life towards its fullness. The description of the mystery cult by Odo Casel clearly puts this in evidence: "The mystery is a sacred ritual action in which a saving God is made present through the rite; the congregation, by performing the rite, takes part in the saving act, and thereby wins salvation."² Worship here differs from devotion which was meant for placating or pleasing the divinity or for submitting oneself to God; worship instead, is an act by which one gets involved in the divine action.

In the life of the Jewish people we find another approach to worship which basically has the same dynamism although a different set of symbols is used; these symbols reveal a different understanding of the search for the beyond as well as a different style in the divine saving action. The symbols used by the people of Israel are expressions of their historical struggle. God is the God of liberation at the Exodus and their struggle is for their arrival in the land of freedom. The divine action is envisaged as that of one who gets involved in their history. He is named after the names of those who led them in the struggle for liberation: God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The people had to get involved in the struggle and their worship was a sign of their readiness to continue this involvement. The false worship or idolatry was that which prevented them from this involvement; that is why they were warned against the gods of the Canaanites and others, who were deities to be worshiped and placated, while Israel was called to respond to God by living their commitment to the covenant which was to have its fulfillment in the acquisition of the promised land.

With the coming of Christ this God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob becomes the God of Our Lord Jesus Christ who dies for his brothers and sisters and lives to give them fullness of life. Worship here is performed by using the symbols that express this self-gift and the use of them makes the worshippers become involved in the lives of their brothers and sisters. The sacrifice of the New Testament is precisely this involvement of which the perfect expression and paradigm is the Cross. The objective of this worship is to build up a community of love and sharing: the kingdom of God.

2. Odo Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship*, London (1963) p. 54

We can see here an evolution in the symbols of worship, not in terms of better and better forms of obeisance to God, but in terms of a search by man to find meaning to life. God enters here not as an object of devotion, but as a co-traveller: He is the one who originated the journey by sharing with man His own life at creation; He continues to facilitate man's free response to Him by being present with him under various signs and symbols which signify the adventure of man through life. The only danger to the authenticity of this worship has been its reduction to mere devotion, legalism and ritualism. These dangers have been present all through man's life of worship.

2. The role of worship in Christianity

The originality of Christian worship, according to me, is described in two texts of the New Testament: Heb. 10:5-10 and Rom 15: 16. In the letter to the Hebrews we read, "This is what he said on coming into the world: You who wanted no sacrifice or oblation, prepared a body for me. You took no pleasure in holocausts or sacrifices for sin, then I said just as I was commanded in the scroll of the book, 'God, here I am!' I am coming to obey your will. Notice that he says first: You did not want what the law lays down as the things to be offered, that is: the sacrifices, the oblations, the holocausts and the sacrifices for sin, and you took no pleasure in them; and then he says: Here I am! I am coming to obey your will. He is abolishing the first sort to replace it with the second. And this will was for us to be made holy by the offering of his body made once and for all by Jesus Christ" (Heb 10:5-100). Here we see that worship as a mere ritual act prescribed from outside is rejected. This is replaced by an act of worship done by the 'body'. The body makes the human being visible and capable of relating to others. Christ used His body, given to others on the cross out of love, as the sign of the new worship. In other words the new worship is to be performed through signs of human love, the climax of which is the laying down of one's life for the other. The body is made holy by making it a sign of love through self-gift. The New Testament worship is to be performed not through external ritualism, but by making the internal attitude of love visible through a life of relationship. The result of this is the building up of the community. The vertical dimension of relationship to God is to

be realised through the horizontal expression of human relationship. God is honoured when we are a community of love. The early Church understood this very well. In fact their worship was celebrated in the context of an agape, a fraternal meal. The fundamental sign of this new worship is the community. Hence, the more authentic this sign is, the greater and more efficacious would be the celebration. All other signs are to be only expressions of this sign or are meant to enhance the meaning and understanding of this basic sign. In fact we find in the early church the sign of the community constituting the core of worship. The temple of sacrifice is replaced by the Church, namely, the gathering of the Christian community. This is the new temple (Eph. 2:20-22). The material used for worship is that which is shared among the members of the community (Lk 22:14-20). The officiating minister is not called 'priest', but president of the community. The effect of the celebration is to build up a community of love and sharing (Acts 2:42-45). That which prevents one from worshipping is the inability to belong to the community. The so-called serious sins that prevented one from participating in the liturgy were those which made the Christian incapable of belonging meaningfully to the community.

But we find that as the Church grows this community sense is replaced by an institutional sense and the signs of worship reflect the organization of an institution. The first step towards this is the separation of the agape from the Eucharist. The sign of fraternal meal is replaced by bread and wine brought into the community from outside the assembly. It still had, however, a connection with the community, but not that dynamic connection as before. Once the meal which was the sign of communion, was removed, the unifying link became the president: the institutional character enters here. The person of the leader of the community is enhanced. He is no more the president (relationship to community), but the priest (relationship to God). Gradually the community becomes a passive spectator. Even when it is active, what it does is only to respond to the priest. The main agent of the celebration is the priest and not the community. The sanctuary which is the place of the priest becomes sacred place and the actions that he performs there become sacred actions. The active participation of the faithful is understood as an action by which they join with the priest who offers the sacrifice.

Here we see the real reason of our liturgical malaise. The basic sign of the New Testament is lost.

The second text that we want to examine with regard to the New Testament worship is from the letter to the Romans. "He has appointed me a priest of Jesus Christ, and I am to carry out my priestly duty (*leitourghia*) by bringing the Good News from God to the pagans, and so make them acceptable as an offering, made holy by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16). For Paul the priestly service (*leitourghia*) consists in proclaiming the Good News. It is primarily an act of proclamation of the word and not mere performance of the rituals. This is the good news, that is a word that touches their lives and enables them to change their lives so that they can, like Christ, make themselves an offering to God through their life of love and self-gift. The main action of the liturgical celebration is proclamation of the word that transforms people. Naturally in order that this may happen it is necessary that the life of the people is also present in the celebration. Only then will the proclaimed word become the good news. But gradually we find that this proclamatory aspect gives way to instruction and worse still the hieratic use of the word acquires prominence over its prophetic character. The word is not used to bring good news, it has no connection with the life of the people. It is more oriented to God. It is more a statement about God than God's word to His people. The lack of intelligibility of the word is not a problem because the people come to worship in order to contemplate the mystery than to be transformed by the mystery. In this way we witness also the vanishing of the second basic element, namely the proclamatory character of Christian worship.

The renewal of Vatican II had for its objective the restoration of the authentic signs in the liturgical celebrations. But so far we have made but an effort to make ritual changes. The basic signs of the community and the word which were lost have not received sufficient attention in the process of renewal, while the signs that came into the liturgy during the period of its institutionalisation were introduced in the name of returning to the tradition.

The principle of active participation, a key idea in the renewal movement is closely linked with the two basic signs of community and proclamation. When the community becomes active every member becomes involved in the common action.

The liturgical action becomes the action of every one. This is what is meant by the statement of the liturgical constitution. "Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebration which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people (1 Pet, 2:9, cf 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else"³. This active participation implies two things: 'to belong to' a community and 'to be involved in' the community: for the first, one must be able to enter into the attitude of Christ and express the belonging externally through sharing, here is the role of the body; for the second, one must also be able to respond to God who speaks in and through the community, here is the role of the word. Only when both these take place can one say that one has achieved true participation. But if both these are taken seriously there are many implications which will demand certain very important changes in the way we celebrate our liturgy. We have to take into account these implications when we speak of a liturgy for the third millennium.

3. The Church in the third millennium

The shape of the liturgy in the third millennium will very much depend on the shape the Church will take then. What will it be? The Second Vatican Council having been a new Pentecost has definitely ushered in a new era in the life of the Church. The consequence of Pentecost on the apostolic community was that it became a community of mission. In the same way this new Pentecost of Vatican II should give the Church a renewed sense of mission. In what does this sense of mission consist? "The community gathered around the table of the Lord receives the inspiration and power to go forth to put the word of justice and peace into action. Eucharist not only gathers the community, it also sends it forth for mission and action."⁴ As at the first Pentecost, the Spirit reminds the community of the Lord's death

3. SC n. 14

4. Jerome Theisen, *Images of the Church and the Eucharist*, Worship 58 (1984) 2, 129.

and resurrection. This happens in the liturgy. As a consequence of this the community becomes a community of mission; that is a community that evangelises and not merely expands the institutional Church. The new image of the community is a dynamic one. Some of the characteristics of its missionary dynamism are the following. The Christian community is awakened to a renewed response of faith. During the past centuries faith was understood more in terms of an affirmation of truth; its authenticity was tested through dogmatic formulations. Today we are asked to understand faith as response, that is, listening to God speaking in the world and responding to Him by living in the world. The community of faith is, therefore, a community in the world. It is an on-going attitude of listening in openness. The formulation of faith will have to be made not only taking into account the correctness of intellectual data, but also its relevance to life. When such a community celebrates its faith, there will be a liturgy that is very unique. It is a community that is led by the Spirit of Jesus. It will have a freshness of life which will enable it to relate itself to others. It will not be a ghetto or clique. Its mission will consist in being a leaven that transforms the world rather than an institution that is only eager to strengthen its structures. This vision of the Church will affect worship forms. The result will be the creation of a witnessing community and not a proselytising one. When we witness, what we are eager for is not to convince others but to be convinced ourselves and to express this conviction by sharing our experiences. This is a community that is more eager to be converted than to convert others; its mission of evangelisation will consist in sharing its life with others in love. Its aim will be the establishment of the kingdom of God even if at times this will have to take place without the people entering into the institutional Church. It will be a community of the word that is alive and active in the world through the action of the Spirit.

4. The role of worship in this Church

Liturgy is the celebration of faith. If our faith is understood as response to God speaking today, the liturgy of the Church should have a secular dimension. This is the worship of the Church in the world. It will celebrate the mystery of Christ continuing his struggle in the world. It will not be a mere commemoration of the

death of the Lord that took place two thousand years ago. It will be the celebration of the Paschal Mystery as it is being realised in our history today. "Jesus is remembered as the one into whose suffering all suffering is taken, as the one in whose name all those left without a name are named, as the one in whose remembrance the forgotten of the world are remembered."⁵ When we achieve this type of actuality, our liturgy will not be mere devotion. It will have a political thrust, namely, it will create an urge to walk towards the Calvary of today, to face the powerful ones of our society, to challenge the structures of their authority and face the consequences of such an action, even if it means the renewal of the death on Calvary for those who have had the courage to make this memory. Undoubtedly our so-called traditions will have to be reviewed. We do not want to delink ourselves from the past, but go deeper into the living source of the past, destroy the fossils that history has left on the pages of humanity and come out with a renewed vigour in order to face the challenges of today and create a new future. "As a new consciousness of the human and of the cosmic emerges within our culture, we are engaged in some kind of night-battle with liturgical tradition. It is the engagement with life that we need to bring to worship, the readiness to be challenged to self-understanding by an affirmation of the holy that gives perspective to the appropriation of new social and inner experience."⁶

Another aspect of worship in the third millennium will be the result of a new understanding of the Church as a community of communion rather than of a congregation. We are witnessing today a change from orthodoxy based on intellectual affirmation to an orthodoxy emerging from a deep sense of communion in love. Is this not more in line with what St. John says in his first letter: "What we have seen and heard we are telling you so that you too may be in union with us, as we are in union with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3)? In such a Church liturgy will be marked by simplicity of style, lay participation, personal faith, devotion to God's word, devotion to the

5. David Power, *Households of faith in the coming Church*, Worship 57 (1983) 3, 253.

6. David Power, *Liturgical prescies: A new consciousness at the eye of worship*, worship 6, (1987) 4, 290

humanity of Jesus, all gathered together under the umbrella of the desire to return to the Gospel models of Christian life and Christian worship. Our liturgical celebration today suffers too much from impersonalism, anonymity and lack of warmth of human relationship. An approach to God, a transcendence that does not take place apart from these human media cannot be genuinely Christian precisely because God has come down to us in human form. The fear that some express in stating that the Eucharist is a meal is a typical instance in the case. Some say that we should not exaggerate the meal so as to lose the idea of sacrifice. They forget that the meal that is an expression of genuine love can never be an exaggeration because it will lead one to die. This happened to Christ. His sacrifice on the cross has as its core element the love that made him die for the neighbour which he celebrated at the last supper. It is precisely thus that revealed the fatherhood of God which made it possible for all to enter into communion with God. Hence the secular character, the human dimension is an essential element of our Christian worship. This was forgotten in the past; even after Vatican II, this is not sufficiently in evidence. We have to highlight this in any attempt to create a new liturgy for the third millennium.

5. The characteristics of the worship in the third millennium

a) It has to emerge from within the Church

There is no doubt that the first element that we have to take into account when we speak of worship is the symbol system that we adopt. Today no one denies that these symbols have to be taken from the culture of the people. It has to be an inculturated liturgy. But there is another problem that is more radical than this. We saw that the basic symbols of Christian worship are the community and the word. The liturgical symbols should, therefore, not only be culturally conditioned, but they must also be the result of an interaction with the life of the community in its historical adventure. It is a community that is in communion with the other communities who are fellow pilgrims journeying towards a common goal. It is also a community that has to respond to the Lord who speaks from within the world where he has preceded us by virtue of his resurrection. Therefore these symbols will have to express not only the

doctrines of our Christian faith, but also will have to be the expressions of the challenges of the world that is refusing to be submitted to the demands of the word of the Lord, challenges of future with immense possibilities on condition that we respond unconditionally and selflessly to the Spirit of the risen Jesus. The real renewal of liturgy will take place only when new symbols will emerge as a result of interaction of the word with life and not by inventing aesthetic symbols or theologically meaningful symbols whatever be their value: such a liturgy will not be merely devotional but challenging signs of faith. Will our present institutional Church be capable of such liturgies? I have my serious doubts. Probably we will have to look for them in communities that are less clergy dominated and less attached to past rituals. Ecclesial communities such as those we find in Arunachal Pradesh, with practically no priests to preside over their ecclesial assemblies, may perhaps lead the way in creating liturgies of this kind.

b) The purpose of liturgy

The primitive mystery cults were oriented towards the restoration of the cosmic order; in later ages when religion became a means of obtaining favours the devotional element entered into it. The Christian worship in the early Church was mainly meant to make the disciples experience the risen Lord and become the messengers of His Gospel. In the middle ages the cultic or worship dimension, *Iatria*, became the main objective of the liturgy. Today in the changed perspective of the image of the Church, the purpose of the liturgy should be the creation of the new order. This will necessarily pose a challenge to the old one, including that of the Church because the kingdom of God is wider than and beyond the Church; its demands cannot be curbed by the requisites of the institutional Church. In order that the liturgy may facilitate the creation of the new order it is necessary to form communities of the Spirit. The new liturgy will recognise the big role the Holy Spirit has to play in it. It will demand the communion of the disciples and make them enter into relationship with others breaking down all barriers that society and situation might have imposed on them. They will become authentic communities of communion capable of bearing witness to the Gospel values.

c) The elements of worship in the third millennium

In the early Church, as we have seen, the elements that

constituted worship were all derived from its community and proclamatory character. When returning to the authentic tradition we have to retrieve these elements. But in doing so, it is necessary to take care that we celebrate the life of the community today and not merely copy the custom of venerable antiquity. If this will happen the themes of our celebrations will not merely be virtues and miracles of saints, but the struggles and toils of our fellow humans. There are, in the Missal today, many celebrations to honour saints and receive graces. But very few that challenge the people to get involved into the life of the world. If we seriously strive to give our liturgy this life-centered character, then the creation of celebrations and their frequency as well as the composition of texts will be determined by the life of the community, its rhythm of action, its problems and strivings. This will call for presidents of assemblies who are not merely well trained ritualists or theologians, but people who are capable of leading communities. Another consequence will be the deep involvement of lay people in the celebration. They will have to make their charisms active and bring them to an operational level in the community's life. Since liturgy and life are very closely related the gifts which the Spirit has given to individual Christians by virtue of Baptism and Confirmation will come into play when the community celebrates its faith. The involvement of the community will be such that every single person will feel that he has a role to play in the life of the community and that he has a mission to fulfil in the over-all missionary thrust of the community.

d) Proclamatory character

Looking at the liturgy from the perspective of a Church in the state of mission, its prophetic character will come to the forefront. The first Christians used cultic terminology not to indicate the acts of worship, but to express the way they lived. Worship was a means to create a sense of transformation and mission in the community. This was done by giving to liturgy a prophetic character. According to Emile Durkheim, one of the main functions of ritual was to produce a social coherence which in effect tended to reinforce the *status quo*⁷. The liberation theo-

7. Emile Durkheim, *The elementary forms of the religious life* translated by J. W. Swain, New York, 1965 pg 414 H.

gians have recently turned their guns at ritual's part in oppression. Camillo Torres asked and received permission to be relieved from his clerical obligation. He sacrificed "... one of the rights I love most dearly - to be able to celebrate the external rites of the Church as a priest - in order to create the conditions that make cult more authentic"⁸. A group of Ecuadorian priests declared: "The hour has come for us as servants of the people of God in Ecuador to unite our voices to the cry of the people and the voice of the apostle Paul: we cannot continue calmly to celebrate the event of liberation in the Eucharist, in which the oppressors and the oppressed eat the same bread and drink the same wine - without any true reconciliation"⁹. Undoubtedly, given the immensely widening gap that exists between the poor and the rich, liturgical celebration has to become more prophetic. This will happen when we give importance to the proclamation of the word and try to make even the ritual action an act of proclamation. In fact, the core of the liturgy is nothing else but the prophetic proclamation of Jesus. The Church that renews the death and resurrection of Jesus should make it become vibrant in our communities so that when the words of consecration are uttered the reaction of the people should not be a mere act of adoration, but an interior urge that enables them to lay down their life for the others. Another aspect of the prophetic character of our liturgy should be the tearing down of all distinction based on caste and class from our celebrations. We read in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*: "if a poor man or woman comes, whether they are from your parish or another, especially if they are advanced in years, and there should be no room for them, then make a place for them. O bishop, with all your heart, even if you yourself have to sit on the ground. You must not make any distinction between persons, if you wish your ministry to be pleasing to God"¹⁰. What is said here regarding the poor man/woman is very well applicable to our Indian situation in some places with regard to caste discrimination in assemblies of worship. A prophetic proclamation should challenge this situation and should enable the Christian community to stand up against such unchristian expressions of faith.

8. G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, New York 1973, pp. 282 & 31.

9. Ibid 282 n. 34.

10. L. Deiss, *Springtime of the Liturgy*, college 1979, p. 176.

8. Relationship between Christian worship, community and people of other faiths

We cannot think of a Christian community that is closed as heaven in society is so related to the people of other faiths. This is true also in some extent in moments of worship. Our traditional liturgy forbids anything that cracks of communion in sacris. How to approach this problem? As the third millennium is fast approaching, there is a greater realization that the time has come for the peoples of Asia and Africa not to be mere passive recipients of the Christian heritage as it has been articulated in the past twenty centuries of Christian worship on the ground and Pentecostal Mystery. All over the country we detect the movement of the Spirit bringing people together to new relationships¹¹. How can we express this fellowship in worship? If we seriously attempt to express it, then our liturgy will undergo a radical change. I do not intend to speak here about such changes in official worship. But there can be certain attitudes expressed in our worship which can foster this fellowship. One of them is a sense of the mystery. Here the term 'mystery' must not be understood as arcana, but a sense of wonder about ourselves and the one reality behind all diversity which is at the core of every worship. This can take us to a deeper communion with all even during our specific form of worship. If we express it symbolically there will take place the second manifestation of our fellowship, namely oneness. This will create a solidarity of common human concern, our common struggle for meaning and our common pilgrimage towards our common destiny. When worship is celebrated in the context of life, there is every chance of a deeper fellowship with people of other religions. Even if a common worshipping act may not be still possible, the sense of communion will enable us to evolve new symbol systems. It can happen that worship symbols can be at times very alienating and far from can have its origin in acts of worship. We have seen it taking place in our own country recently in the case of Ram Jambhoom and Bani Meo, I hope if we Christians can evolve a symbol system that can draw from the harmony of religions we will be truly celebrating the mystery of Christ who came into the world in order to unite humanity under the Fatherhood of God.

11. Paul Punnarajayya M.S., *Sharing Worship*, Bangalore 1988 p. 787-788

Our worship will have to move along these lines so that we can all call God our Father.

7. The training of ministers for this liturgy

Even after Vatican II, with all the renewal that we have introduced in our worship we have to confess that the leaders of our worshipping communities are by and large no more than ritualists. We still consider ordination as a sacrament that authorises one to say Mass according to the rites of the Church. If this situation has to change, it is necessary to bring about a transformation in the understanding of the role of the priest during liturgy. He is not one who says or celebrates the liturgy. He is one who presides over the community that celebrates. Once this is clearly understood, the role of the priest will become one of animator of the community. Even when he presides over the liturgy, it being an act of animation, his main concern will be not the rites, but the community and its life. He will be performing signs that evoke, interpret and communicate the action of the Lord in the life of that community. For this he will have to be involved in their life. He will have to emerge from their midst. His action as the president of the liturgical assembly will not be mere ritualistic, but prophetic. One of the most important roles that he has to fulfil here is the proclamation of the word. He has to make sure that he truly makes the word of the Bible good news to his people. For this he has to share their bad news; he has to become one with them; then his words will resound in the assembly as the word of the Lord. Being the president of the community, he has also the duty to make sure that all the members of the community exercise their charisms. He has to facilitate them to exercise it. Then the whole action will become communitarian leading to the formation of a witnessing community. But our formation houses hardly take care of this exigency of forming proper leaders of worshipping communities. The lack of training in creativity in the right sense at times results in either fostering chaos in the celebrations or a rigid formalism which is incapable of communicating life and energy to the community. We need to have proper centers that can train pastors for the new liturgy of the third millennium.

8. Transition from the past to the future

At this juncture it is important to note that our futuristic

vision of liturgy should not make us rootless. The liturgy of tomorrow will not happen at the tick of the midnight hour of the year 2000. Our evolution towards the future must have continuity; but this continuity should be the result of fidelity as well as creativity. Fidelity should be first and foremost to the Lord; it should also help us to gather together the experience of the Church during the last 2 millennia, giving us the courage to eliminate what is opposed to genuine Christian worship and maintaining the values that are still relevant. However it is necessary that these values be expressed in new symbols. It is going to be almost always irrelevant if we transplant the symbol systems of the past into the present. But the richness of significance should always be maintained and handed over to future generations, leaving to them the freedom to express them in the most relevant way they think fit. Creativity is going to be precisely here. It is not the same as novelty. The 'new' is in the interpretation of life as it evolves in the course of time. What is relevant is always 'new'. So the main criteria to be followed in our effort to be creative is 'relevance'.

Conclusion

Our liturgical renewal so far has been one of restoration, that is made up of signs that came from inside. As a consequence we have been able to remain faithful to dogmatic formulas which are the minimum required for the maintenance of faith. We know that true faith is dynamic; it is an on-going effort to relate until we all experience the reality of our oneness in God our Father. For this we have to discover new signs, challenging us to new relationships and enabling us to build up a life of communion that overcomes all our differences. In the third millennium the Spirit is calling the Church to a universality of communion. Our liturgy, being a moment in which the Spirit reminds us of our relationship to Jesus and to one another, should become a dynamic expression of the active presence of the Spirit crying out within us 'Come Lord Jesus: The Spirit and the Bride say 'come' (Rev. 22:16).

The Vision of an Ecumenical Church

The first and second millennia witnessed several tragic divisions and fragmentations in the one Church of Jesus Christ. On the ecclesial landscape today there are hundreds of Christian Denominations vying with one another, each one claiming to possess the absolute truth and casting aspersions on others as "heretics" and "schismatics" or as defective in matters of "faith and order". Does the Third Millennium give us the hope of realization of the Lord's prayer, "May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you so that the world may believe it was you who sent me" (John 17:21)? Is there any real possibility, in the third millennium, of One Reunited Church, of reconciliation among the divided Churches and the rediscovery of their wholeness? Has the ecumenical movement of the 20th century any bright prospect in the emerging millennium? The answer to this question depends on the vision we entertain with regard to the one reunited Church.

What is our vision of an Ecumenical Church in the coming millennium? Unity of the Church can no more be conceived as a return of the other Churches as prodigals back to the Roman Catholic Church and its monolithic unity. Nor is it a return of all to the Orthodox Church or one or other Protestant Church like the Church of South India. The unity and diversity of the Churches should not be looked upon as a problem or as the root-cause of divisions. On the contrary, a rich variety and diversity of Churches has not only been a fact but also the norm ever since the inception of the Church. So any movement for uniformity should be dismissed as a distorted vision of unity.

The vision of One Reunited Church calls for a "Copernican Revolution" among the Churches. We shall not regard the other Churches as planets rotating around our own Church as if we were the centre. Every Church must be ready to abandon the

concept of unity centred round it. No one Church is at the centre, but Jesus Christ is at the centre of all the Churches. The way to unity is the movement towards the centre who is Jesus Christ. When all Churches move towards this centre, they will be closer to one another, as different points at the circumference of a circle are closer to one another when they move towards the centre of the circle. It calls for a radical renewal or conversion, *metanoia*, on the part of every Church by focussing on Christ.

The one reunited Church will be a fellowship or communion of different Churches, united in the one common faith. But each Church will be different and unique, *autocephalous* or self-governing and *autonomous* (with its own norms, structures, theology and traditions). It will be a "unity in diversity". No Church will be under any other Church. No Church will be superior to others. No Church will dictate to other Churches. It will be a brotherly and sisterly communion. Members and ministers of any Church will be welcome to all other Churches. They will have communion in the celebration of one another's sacraments and worship. This was exactly the vision and practice of the early Churches.

The rediscovery of the original vision

It will be too naive to think that the early Church was a homogeneous group with a uniform organization and administrative system headed by Peter or any other apostle. On the contrary, it was a fellowship of different local Churches characterized by enormous diversity in the forms of organization and administration, patterns of worship, and articulation and formulation of faith and doctrines. This diversity flowed out spontaneously from their different historical, cultural, socio-economic, political and religious contexts.

The first Christian community was the Jerusalem community consisting of the apostles, disciples and first followers of Christ, all drawn from Judaism. It was a typically "Jewish Church" in its beliefs, rituals, prayers, life-style and community organization centred round the "Council of Elders". They continued the entire Old Testament traditions, attended the temple and the synagogues but accepted Jesus Christ as the Messiah whom their own Old Testament tradition had announced. The separation between Judaism and Christianity happened later by a gradual historical process.

From Jerusalem and its surroundings Christianity gradually spread to Antioch, and from Antioch to the gentile world of Asia Minor, Greece and Rome. These new missionary Churches were quite different from the Jewish Churches in their life style and approach to other cultures and nations. This emergence of the Hellenistic and Gentile Christianity vis-à-vis the Jewish Christianity triggered a host of tensions and conflicts among the early Christian communities. This problem had already arisen within the Jerusalem Church in the tension between the "Hellenists" and the "Hebrews" (Acts 6:1-7). The "Hellenists" were diaspora jews who got themselves settled in Jerusalem, but were at home in the Greek language and culture, whereas the "Hebrews" were the native Palestinian jews who strictly adhered to Hebrew and Aramaic language and culture. There was a complaint of discrimination against the Hellenists, and the Apostles showed justice to the Hellenists by giving leadership to their representatives like Stephen and others. It was these Hellenists who were the pioneers of the mission in the gentile world and the founders of a new type of Churches, indeed with the approval and under the guidance of Peter and Paul.

The Acts of the Apostles narrates very vividly the story of the struggles of these new missionary Churches (Hellenistic and Gentile) to break away from the Hebrew traditions of their mother Church in Jerusalem. The Jewish Church in Jerusalem, the Mother Church, was first unwilling to approve the emergence of the Hellenistic and Gentile Churches which were quite different in their lifestyle and traditions. The Jewish Christians insisted that the new Gentile Christians should accept and practise the whole of "the Law and Prophets" including the rite of circumcision. This narrow view was challenged by the Hellenistic and Gentile Christians whom the Council of Jerusalem supported with the ruling that the Jewish Law and traditions should not be imposed on the new Gentile Christians (Acts 15). The first ecumenical council thus had a pluralistic approach to the ecclesial traditions. Its vision was not of a uniform Church, but of a communion of different Individual Churches.

There are clear indications in the New Testament for the existence of different types of Christian communities. Some of them shared the apocalyptic hope of the period and eagerly waited

for the second coming of Christ who would establish the Messianic Kingdom (Thessalonians I & II; Mk. Ch. 13 etc). Some others, e. g., the early Pauline communities, were characterized predominantly by the charismatic element. There were still others who were more institutionalized and organized with patterns of episcopal ministry and other well-established traditions (Pastoral Letters). But all these co-existed and they had full communion with one another provided they all adhered to the central Christological faith that Jesus is God and man, that he is our Saviour.

Today we have to re-discover this original vision of the Church as a communion of different types of Churches, united in the central Christological faith but different in expressions and life-style of this faith determined by their own historical, cultural and social contexts.

Types of Churches today

The Churches today do not have the uninterrupted historical continuity with the New Testament ecclesial types we have outlined. The New Testament types gave way to the development of other new types of Churches. The conversion of the emperor Constantine and the identification of the Church with the Roman empire was a decisive event in the evolution of Churches. Some important centres in the empire and the Churches therein exerted influence on the surrounding regions, and slowly the Churches in the Roman empire were organized broadly under the five patriarchates — Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Constantinople. Under the patronage of these centres the major liturgical "Rites" gradually developed and the different Individual Churches emerged. The Churches outside of the Roman empire, such as the Persian and the Armenian developed their own liturgical rites and individuality. As the Roman empire was divided into Western and Eastern empires, so too the Churches were very broadly classified as Western and Eastern.

Most of the Churches around Alexandria and Antioch were separated from the other Churches in the Roman empire owing to their theological and doctrinal differences in Christology during the 5th century. These Churches are called the Monophysite and Nestorian types of Churches or together called the Oriental Orthodox Churches. The second major division happened in the 11th century when the Western Roman Church and the

Orthodox Church of Constantinople excommunicated each other which was the climax of centuries-long political rivalries and theological disputes between Rome and Constantinople. This type of Orthodox Churches are today in Greece, the whole of Eastern Europe and Russia with a total number of about 180 million. The Protestant type of Churches emerged during the 16th century Reformation in Europe and they are divided among themselves under numerous denominations with a total number of about 500 million Christians. The Anglicans are yet another type of Churches emerged from the moderate reformation in England where they made a synthesis between Catholicism and Protestantism. Today we have, therefore, several major types of Churches with sub-types within each of them. How do we envisage unity or communion among these numerous types of Individual Churches?

The vision of the future

We have already indicated that the vision of unity we need to have is the original vision of the early Churches. Unity shall not be envisaged as a reduction of all the existing types and individual Churches to one type or to one historical Church whether it be Roman Catholic or Orthodox or Protestant. No one Church can claim to be the only valid type or the only one model. Some ecumenists may argue that all our historical identities and ecclesial individualities must be abandoned, giving way to a new common identity or one new re-united Church, like the Church of South India model. This is an amalgamation model which views the historical ecclesial identities as obstacles and problems: But it must be pointed out that the existing individual Churches and their identities are our precious heritage which must be maintained and safeguarded although these identities should not be conceived as static and closed. No one historical Church is a finally finished product, but is always in the making by a giving and taking process of growth. A federation of Churches like the World Council of Churches is also an inadequate model. What should unite us is not merely a common plan of action, but our common faith which must be discovered, expressed and celebrated together in a deeper communion.

Our vision of one reunited Church should be clearly in terms of a "Communion of Churches" or "Fellowship of Churches" where all Churches must recognize each other as equals. This communion shall be grounded in the common faith and in the

communion of the sacraments. Such a communion must be maintained, supported and fostered in a conciliar relationship among the Churches. To be more clear, all the Churches must be able to sit together as equals in an ecumenical council which could be a visible sign of our ecclesial communion.

The realization of this vision requires a conversion and renewal on the part of all the Churches. Divisions among the Churches and their isolated existence for centuries have, in fact, caused some fragmentation among all the Churches, though in different proportions. So there is need of healing and the rediscovery of wholeness for all the Churches without any exception. It calls for theological and doctrinal dialogue among the Churches, common reflection, common action and common prayer as well as worship. Healing of our wounds and the rediscovery of our wholeness or catholicity need time, hard work and God's blessings. We cannot fabricate Church unity in a day or two. It is in our hopelessness and helplessness that God utters his healing and powerful Word which alone could unite and save us.

The One Church of Christ exists in the many Churches however defective they are. How can we discern and discover the One Church in the many Churches? Could we speak of some distinguishing marks of the One Church of Christ? St. Augustine described the "marks" or "notes" of the true Church as "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic". Martin Luther identified three visible signs or marks of the true Church, namely, the possession of the Holy Word of God, the holy sacrament of Baptism and the holy Eucharist. The Second Vatican Council acknowledged the presence of several "ecclesial elements" in other Churches such as, the Sacred Scriptures, the Sacraments, the episcopate etc. (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 15).

Could we spell out some signs or marks of the One Church in the many Churches along these lines? Ever since the beginning of the Church the most important distinguishing mark of the Church was its faith in Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, fully divine and fully human. Any Church which deviates from this central Christological faith can no more be considered Christian. Secondly, all the Churches consider both the Old and New

Testament books in general as their precious and sacred heritage. Christian communities will be inspired and guided at all times by the Sacred Scriptures as they enshrine the original Christian experience, however different their interpretations may be. Thirdly, the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist by which almost all Christian communities celebrated the memorial of Christ and thereby built up the community into the one Body of Christ, will remain always a distinguishing mark of the Church. Fourthly, the continuation of the mission of the Church entrusted to it by Christ is what makes the Church true to itself. The Church lives by its mission. It is the proclamation and celebration of the Good News of salvation to the whole humankind.

Fifthly, the mission and ministry are closely related. The mission of the Church is enhanced and continuously revitalized by a special ministry in the Church which is a continuation of the Apostolic ministry of the early Churches. This special ministry in the Church may be exercised under various forms and patterns. Should we still insist on the episcopal system of ministry as the only valid form? Should we still explain the "Apostolic Succession" as a mechanical continuity in the episcopal ordinations? These are serious questions the Catholic and Orthodox traditions have to face. Sixthly, could we speak of an "Ecumenical Papacy", which may continue today the biblical "Petrine Ministry" of being an instrument of communion, co-ordination, reconciliation and strengthening in the fellowship of the many Churches? Could this "Petrine Ministry" in the universal fellowship of the Churches be exercised by any leader from any Church or should it be necessarily continued by the historical Papacy?

What we are suggesting here is not a "reductionism" or "minimalism". We are not reducing the Churches to their least minimum or commonality at the expense of their individuality and uniqueness. We are only trying to identify some of the signs of the "One Church" of Christ in the "Many Churches" which are the concrete embodiments or unique individual realizations of the former. While emphasizing the unity and communion among the Churches, their diversity and uniqueness must be safeguarded and promoted at all costs, so that the catholicity or wholeness of the Church may be discovered and enhanced.

Our vision of the future will be very romantic, utopian and unrealistic unless we take note of the ever increasing divisions and fragmentations in the existing Churches and the phenomenon of mushrooming of new Churches and sects today. The third millennium will witness such new religious and sectarian movements in their full vigour, especially when the main line Churches will be pushing forward to translate their ecumenical vision into reality. Whatever be the obstacles and hardships ahead, the vision of an ecumenical Church should be fully alive in us today as our task and challenge in the third millennium.

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Christendom, Christianity, Christianness

I begin with a question of vocabulary.

The word 'christian' can be the adjectival content of christendom (a civilization), of christianity (a religion) and of christianness (personal religiousness). During the period of the so-called christian culture of the high middle ages, one could hardly be a christian without belonging to christendom. Until recently, one could hardly confess oneself to be christian without belonging to christianity.

Now, people increasingly envisage the possibility of being christian as a personal attitude without adhering either to christendom or to christianity as institutional constructs. I speak here of a personal, not an individualistic, attitude. Person always implies community. The christian attitude is ecclesial, which does not mean ecclesiastical, which, in the current sense of the word, is synonymous with a large traditional organization. *Ecclesia* (church), strictly speaking, implies an organism, not an organization. An organism needs a soul, life. An organization requires an idea, a rationale¹.

The distinction is important. To be a christian as a member of *christendom* belongs mainly to the past and to the dreams of some for the future, but it does not constitute a problem for the majority of the people. Still, the spirit and the reality of christendom has neither disappeared nor can it be totally abolished from christian consciousness. Some christians today, having recognized the fiasco of Constantine, Charlemagne, Boniface VIII, Alexander VI and others or dreamt of a purified theocracy as did Dante Alighieri

1. See my "The dream of an Indian ecclesiology", in *Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology*, the Indian Theological Association, ed. (Bangalore A. T. C., 1984). pp. 24-54.

in the past and Vladimir Soloviev more recently, would like to try to restore again a new and renewed christendom.

The theological argument stands and is not feeble. If the christian event means anything in the history of humankind, it represents the fact of union, with distinction but without separation, between the human and the divine. The christian event restores again (divine) transcendence with (human) immanence without falling prey to any spiritual or material monism or to any metaphysical dualism. Not only is Christ totally divine and totally human, Man also is called upon to be fully human and fully divine. To put it differently, we have to distinguish, but we cannot sever the political from the religious order. Justice, for instance, belongs to the two realms and it needs therefore to be practised in society. The natural-supernatural dichotomy is lethal for both sides. Religion cannot be severed from life. The christic fact is incarnational, not only as an individual event but also as an historical act in all senses of the word. We should understand and value the efforts of restoration of some christian thinkers who, having overcome the fever of individualism and the crisis of the enlightenment, desire to reconstruct the lost unity of life and civilization by going back to the ideal of christendom.

It belongs both to human nature and to christian dynamism to build 'reservations' where a full human life or the christian ideal can become fully incarnate in the smallest details of life. In the past such reservations were called the christian empire or the christian nation, later, religious orders, and in modern times, sects or movements. All are ambivalent — and not totally obsolete. Yet the christic fact cannot be exhaustively identified with what we call christendom. There is also christianity and christianness. There are many mansions in the Father's house!

We also have *christianity*. When christendom began to collapse around the sixteenth century, it was replaced more and more by christianity as *religion*. To be a christian as a member of christianity amounts to belonging to one religion among many. It may be more or less pure than others. It would, however, represent not only an abuse of language but an abusive language to denounce other religions as false or incomplete. The problems of christianity as religion are different from the issues of christendom as a full-fledged integral human organization. Some hundred

years ago catholics who opposed the 'divine right' of the pontifical states were excommunicated. Those who denied the right to torture heretics also incurred heresy. No catholic christian today feels obliged to obey the rules, laws, and injunctions of the medieval and renaissance popes. Such obligations belonged to christendom, not to christianity.

We should add a remark here similar to the one regarding christendom. Papal nuncios belong to christendom, yet they still exist, and their function may have some historical justification. Canon law is still valid and pontifical encyclicals still carry their authority - to give some catholic examples. But they no longer exhaust the ways of being christian, nor even of being catholic.

A third facet emerges powerfully in our times. To be a christian can also be understood as confessing a personal faith, adopting a christ-like attitude inasmuch as Christ represents the central symbol of one's own life. I call this *christianness*. In German it might be called *christlichkeit*, or *cristiania* in Spanish. With this name I would like to express a new christian consciousness. It spreads all over the world, specially among the new generations and all those who seem ill at ease with over-institutionalization of christianity, specially of official christianity. It is, at any rate, a sociological fact, an ecclesial reality. It is not just new ideas. It is not a more or less new *aggiornamento* - although I sometimes suspect that this famous expression of John XXIII was a diplomatic strategy which spared him the destiny of John Paul I. The new wine demands new wine-skins and it is not satisfied with stitches here and there. It is a question of mutation in the christian self-understanding. In the last instance it is a jump in the history of Being through a new degree of awareness in Man. I have studied this phenomenon elsewhere and described it as the End of History. We could outline it in a few words as being the end of the belief in the temporal immobility of Being. Metaphysics is not an intemporal affair. Time and Being are unseparable.

Be this as it may, christianness would be the christian contribution to the cosmic change in the direction of the universe in which we are all co-involved. We should not forget that the human species is in danger of extinction, be it by self-destruction or by letting the biosphere collapse. To cultivate theology or science today disregarding these facts amounts to intellectual myopia and spiritual callousness.

Christianness does not need to be interpreted as an exclusively historical fact. It is just a *factum*—that is, something we make and at the same time it is not made only by us. Elsewhere I have made a similar distinction: christianity, church, Christ referring respectively to the social aspect of religion, its sacramental dimension, and its mystical core². The last-named could be called the christic principle.

Let me give some examples from the roman tradition. The use of contraceptives is formally forbidden by the supreme authority of catholic christianity. Yet an enormous number of persons belonging to the catholic church ignore such an interdiction and consider themselves 'good catholics'. With divorce a similar situation is beginning to appear in some countries. Also, there are some eighty thousand validly ordained catholic priests who consider themselves such, in spite of having transgressed what they consider the unjust law of celibacy. Abortion, euthanasia, pacifism, capitalism, and communism represent similar conflicting situations. Can one be a communist and a christian, a capitalist and a follower of the Gospel. .?

In a word, christianness differentiates itself from christianity as christianity extricated itself from christendom. The situation is certainly fluid. Each period is a period of transition, but there are epochs more saliently different than others.

One more example: the south and central american grass-roots communities (*comunidades de base*) have spontaneously developed a christianness that does not reflect existing christianity. The Vatican has seen this clearly. Yet institutionalized christianity shows enough theological discrimination, common sense, or political prudence to know that it cannot alienate itself from one of the largest christian continents. So it strikes a political compromise in order that christendom, christianity and christianness might not be split. The christianness of the past century was mainly pietistic and individual. It could tamper with institutionalized christianity without major tensions. Present day christianness presents a more personal and political commitment, and so poses a challenge to christianity. Wisdom here, as

2. See my chapter, "Christianity and World Religions", in *Christianity* (Patiala, Punjabi University) 1969, pp. 78-127. (Guru Nanak Quint-centennial Collection Series).

elsewhere, consists in transforming destructive tensions into creative polarities.

Christianness should not be described only in a negative relation to christianity. I have been saying all along that the three belong together and they cannot be totally separated, although they have to be distinguished.

There is also a theological reason for this distinction. Many religions have sacred-legal scriptures. In the two monotheistic religions of the abrahamic trunk, law is part of revelation itself (Torah, Qur'ān). One could incidentally and ironically remark that marxism, as the fourth abrahamic religion, shows also a similar respect for the Communist Party, which represents a secularized revelation. Not so with christianity. Christianity has no law of its own. For many centuries the Bible for christianity meant only the 'Old Testament'. The 'New Testament' was not considered holy scripture³. Also, christianity has no proper name for the Supreme Being. 'God' is a common name (which for Jesus was his Father). All this suggests the possibility of a christianness different from christendom and christianity.

To be sure, the mystics living in christendom have always been witnesses to the respect due to the legal structures without being imprisoned by them. Sheer rebellion or simply dropping out is not the christic solution. The example of Jesus Christ is too glaring. He is a denouncer and a protestor, even a transgressor, but not a runaway or traitor. Peter had learned to obey God rather than Man, yet as a loyal jew he did not wish to abolish circumcision – although he accepted being overruled by his colleagues and the Holy Spirit.

And in fact if we look back to history we find a score of christians who believed they had reached christianness after overcoming, not rejecting, christendom and christianity. Many simple and deep believers, but also Tertulian, Origen, Eckhart, Savonarola, Dante, Vico, Joachim of Fiore, St. Joan of Arc, St. John of the Cross, Erasmus, Kant, Hegel, and in our times Teilhard de

3. "Es ist bekannt..., dass das Neue Testament sich nirgendwo als 'Schrift' versteht, 'Schrift' ist ihm nur das Alte Testament, während die Christusbotschaft eben 'Geist' ist, der die Schrift verstehen lehrt" K. Rahner and J. Ratzinger, *Episkopat und Primat*; Freiburg (Herder) 1961, p. 47

Chardin and Padre Pio, Merton and Abhishiktananda, could be mentioned as examples.

In sum, the different interpretations of the gospel injunction "Look for the kingdom of God and its justice" could serve as a way of expressing this threefold structure of christic consciousness. Referring to the well-known passage of Luke 17:21, the first attitude will understand 'the kingdom' as a construct 'among' us. The kingdom is also on earth and it has political connotations. The second will underscore the same greek particle, *entos*, as meaning that the kingdom is 'between' us, so that the cultural-communitarian aspect becomes paramount. The third, finally, will be inclined to interpret the kingdom to be 'within' us, thus emphasizing the dimension of interiority. Something similar could be said about the interpretation of the word 'justice'; as mainly a political symbol, a doctrinal one, or an immanent reality. (Let it be recalled that the New Testament word *dikaïosyne* means both justice and justification, righteousness.)

The sociological implications of these distinctions are important. There is undoubtedly in the world today a certain crisis of christian identity. Although there are revivalist movements going back to the ideal of a modernized christendom and other more theological tendencies striving for a reformed christianity, there is a growing number of responsible persons struggling to articulate a genuine christian confession without being totally conditioned by the historical burden of the past and by the doctrinal strictures of tradition. They do not sponsor a privatization of christian identity, although sometimes they are almost forced to it. They sponsor an exteriorization of their christian identity that is the fruit more of inner experience than of historical and doctrinal inertias. More or less consciously aware that the world is undergoing a mutation, they are attempting to live this change at its deepest – that is, at the religious level of their consciousness and consciences. In simpler terms, a substantial number of contemporary christians want to be religious, believers, and even christians – but without the 'contaminations' that they feel have been attached to those names. They aspire to rediscover their roots in order to grow in another soil unspoiled by the manure of ancient times, the graftings of the middle ages, the pesticides of the modern age, and the radiations of modernity. This struggle for renovation is innate

in the human being; it has always been so, but today it is taking on cosmic proportions.

Christianness is a new and old form of christian existence. It is an ancient intuition which many mystics and contemplatives have had since the beginning, but which could not take a sociological form, i.e., the ecclesial shape that is being made visible today. It amounts to a state of awareness and of life which has brought about a double liberation. On the one side it has made itself independent of a fixed (determined, certain) political order, which until now was considered indispensable and essential for the practice of 'christian values' (christendom). On the other side it is also a liberation from identifying to be a follower of Christ with a certain set of doctrines and intellectual statements (christianity).

The new christic self-understanding is neither tied to a certain political order nor to a fixed intellectual state of affairs. It belongs to the mystical realm, the field of experience. Christianness is not a new political form (a new christendom) nor a new intellectual credo (christianity). It is something prior to both. It is an engagement, an experience, a faith which although it may need some specific expressions and even a concrete political order is not identified with any of them.

I would like to insist that in the modern world only the mystics will survive. All the others will be crushed by the System if they rebel against it, or they will suffocate in the System itself if they take refuge in it.

To sum it all up. Christianness takes seriously the overcoming of the Torah, the Law, and would not like to fall into the temptation of christianity, of substituting the Old Testament for a New Alliance. To put it concretely, baptism is not an Ersatz, as substitution for circumcision. The God of History, after the Hiroshimas, Auschwitzes, Kampuchas, Gulags of all times has resigned, just in case he did ever reign. We may ask the slaves and oppressed and defeated of all times. Christianness emerges as a new hope. But as I have always explained: Hope is not of the Future; it is of the Invisible.